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EDITORIAL COMMENT AND NEWS NOTES

THIS ISSUE OF THE JOURNAL

If the staff members of the Santa Monica schools had consciously aimed to upset time-honored traditions, they could not have succeeded more fully than in their Theater for Children project. Ordinarily children struggle to present a dramatic performance which parents and friends frequently view with tolerant amusement. In contrast, the Santa Monica City College Theater for Children, staffed by adults young in years or in spirit, has worked to lift dramatic production to the highest possible level for the entertainment and enlightenment of children and thus has lifted the standard for children's own dramatic efforts.

Ordinarily groups interested in producing plays for consumption by juvenile audiences think of "Cinderella," "Snow White," "Alice in Wonderland" and other classic favorites as suitable vehicles. But the Santa Monica group, realizing that these plays have been made "old hat" by radio and television, prepare new material of contemporary significance which helps children to deepen their understanding and improve their social attitudes toward the people of their times. The plays are consciously designed to help children solve the problems which confront every young person in the process of growing up.

Most producers of theatrical fare for children are preoccupied with the problems of artistic and dramatic rendition behind the footlights. While not overlooking the importance of the quality of the performance, the Santa Monica group is even more concerned with what the experience does to and for children.

Marguerette MacMillan, Principal, Edison School, Santa Monica, has been a real fairy godmother throughout the five-year life of the project. From the inception of the idea, Miss MacMillan has recognized in the project unique opportunities for building citizenship through audience experiences in live theater.

In discussing the project, Miss MacMillan said:

We bring them into a land of make-believe and magic charm. It is a world of fantasy. In our plays, children have seen a royal family—a king, queen, and princess; they have seen a sprite, an ogre, witches, bees and bumblebees, mice and cats.

Miss MacMillan, resplendent in medieval costume of gold lamé and impressive headdress, has served as Mistress of the Revels at each performance. She welcomes the children to City College by telling them that girls and boys in Santa Monica have a reputation for being good audiences and that they are responsible for maintaining this outstanding reputation. "Movie manners are not good enough here," says Miss MacMillan, and so no gum, candy, or popcorn are brought into the beautiful Little Theater. The Mistress of the Revels reminds the inexperienced audience to sit in their seats with their feet on the floor, to laugh when they hear or see something funny, to listen carefully to everything the actors and actresses say, to applaud when it is time to applaud. As an educational leader, Miss MacMillan knows that all behavior is learned and that good theater manners are no exception to the rule.

At the end of the performance, the children are dismissed by the Mistress of the Revels a row at a time in dramatic fanfare style. This procedure makes it possible for the cast to precede the audience to the patio for the autograph party which follows each performance. Programs are provided with space for autographs.

The thrills of meeting the clown face to face, of being able to touch the princess, of looking at the magic witch through the cage, and of talking to the donkeys and horses are evident on the faces of the members of the theater audience as they stand in line for a brief chat with the actors and for the precious autographs. The autograph party is one of the highlights of the Santa Monica project.

Other Santa Monica elementary school principals contribute to the success of the project. Kay Hawkins, Principal, Garfield School, has a background of theater experience, which she has generously put to the service of Santa Monica children throughout the project. So realistic was her queen in an early production, that for months afterwards she was greeted royally by her appreciative clientele at chance meetings on the street or in the supermarket. Since the students of the Theater Arts Department have taken over the spotlight, Miss Hawkins turns her considerable talent to the less spectacular but equally important task of publicity. Miss Hawkins says, however, that *every* elementary school principal in Santa Monica is a publicity director.

Recalling their early efforts to publicize the performances, Miss Hawkins said:

The first publicity was a newsletter sent home to the parents to acquaint them with the facts such as dates of performance, price of tickets, time of

ticket sale. Principals put posters on their bulletin boards and devised ingenious ways to develop the interest of children and parents.

When asked about the most successful of their early experiences in publicizing the project, Miss Hawkins said:

During the first two years, we found one of the most exciting and effective ways to advertise was the use of the City College Verse Choir. Each principal invited the choir for a special school assembly either in the auditorium or outdoors. The choir read such selections as *Ferdinand the Bull*, *Horton Hatches the Egg*, *The Walrus and the Carpenter* and many charming poems by A. A. Milne such as *The King's Breakfast*. These readings delighted the audience. Frequently, members of the choir were also in the cast of the play and were introduced by their director. With enthusiasm at a high pitch, the date of the play was announced and the question: "How many are planning to come to see the play?" brought up every hand in the audience. Of course, every principal knows that not everyone will buy a ticket. However, the ticket sale has been gratifying from the beginning. Now, tradition carries eagerness on the part of children to see the plays and each year extra performances have been added in response to popular demand.

In addition to the effort the Theater Arts Department expends in presenting these productions and the help the elementary school principals and parent-teacher associations give in publicizing them, classes in the vocational division of City College give active co-operation to Children's Theater. The print shop, in charge of Robert Wilkinson, handles the large order for mailing brochures, tickets, and programs for the 10 to 15 performances of each production. The photography class, under the leadership of Howard Jones, takes publicity pictures and decorates the foyer of the Little Theater with a photographic display during the run of the show. Geraldine Simon, an art student, has contributed the line drawings which illustrate the articles of the issue.

The back-cover picture of this issue of the *Journal* was taken by the photography class at Santa Monica City College. The front-cover picture was the work of Earl W. Dible, Supervisor of Special Services, Santa Monica City Unified School District. The success story of Santa Monica's Theater for Children is the result of co-operation from many sources.

In this issue of the *Journal*, Mrs. Gene Owen tells the story of the children's theater as a project of the Theater Arts Department of Santa Monica City College. So far as the Bureau of Elementary Education has been able to ascertain, the Santa Monica Theater is the only full-scale production staged specifically for children by an institution which is an integral part of the school system itself.

Hal Owen tells in an intimate friendly way how this project has become a family writing enterprise carried on during "spare time" at home with a real critic in the form of Barrie Owen, the Owen's twelve-year-old daughter. None of the Owen's efforts—Gene's, Hal's or Barrie's can really be called work because they find so much pleasure in the project.

Mrs. Mary Jean Sutcliffe gives the reader a close-up of the intricacies of costuming and making up the performers in these fantastic plays. Mrs. Sutcliffe is a recognized authority in this field. Reference to Grace Barnes and Mary Jean Sutcliffe, *On Stage Everyone* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954) will prove helpful to persons interested in theater arts.

W. Howard Wilson, the Technical Director, lets the reader in on some of the mysteries of set design, construction, and lighting.

Mrs. Ruth Forncrook, Program Chairman, Santa Monica Parent-Teacher Council, tells of the co-operation and participation of Santa Monica parents. Here is an excellent illustration of all levels of a school system working effectively with parents and other members of the community in planning and achieving an important cultural opportunity for its children.

The *California Journal of Elementary Education* is proud to award its own *Oscar* to this Santa Monica project for the following reasons:

1. Discovery of a way to bring high quality live theater to children
2. Achievement of a co-operative plan which involves an entire community in a worth-while effort and thus demonstrate home-school-community teamwork at a high level
3. Co-ordination of services within a school system in ways mutually beneficial to children in the elementary school and students in the college
4. Release of creative effort in children, youth, and adults in socially useful ways designed to lift esthetic and cultural levels of life in the Santa Monica community.

NEW GUIDE WELL RECEIVED

On September 20, 1956, the Bureau of Textbooks and Publications forwarded a copy of the *Teachers Guide to Education in Early Childhood* to each county superintendent of schools, each city superintendent of schools, and each superintendent of an elementary school district in California. A letter mailed at the same time indicated that a copy was available for all elementary school principals, for all directors and supervisors of instruction in elementary school grades, and for all kindergarten and primary grade teachers.

By October 2, reactions to the publication began to be received from people engaged in various types of educational service. Said one leader in the field of teacher education:

I have spent several hours this past week end reviewing carefully the new book . . . I am impressed by the large number of outstanding school people who contributed their time, talent, and experiences to make each chapter possible. The book is destined . . . to become a basic guide in the preservice education of elementary school teachers in California, in the in-service work of county and local school districts, and the general improvement of classroom practice in the primary grades. To me this publication is just about the finest thing that could come out of . . . the Department of Education.

Deans of divisions of education in California state colleges have commented as follows:

Copies of the Guide have been received by our staff and have evoked enthusiastic responses . . . I am certain it will find ready use in the teacher education programs in the state.

Our teachers have received this book with great enthusiasm . . . a very valuable source in the developmental programs. We hope to keep it as a reference for all courses in which it might apply . . .

We have decided to use the Guide as the text for our classes in Early Childhood Education.

We plan to use the Guide as basic in three of our courses . . . congratulations on the fine job in producing this material.

Directors of elementary education in private colleges have said:

We in elementary education find the Guide very valuable. It is being used . . . in two sections of our basic elementary school curriculum course. We have ordered copies for the library, curriculum laboratory, and other staff members who teach elementary education.

I circulated this fine book among our staff members asking for opinions and comments. Two reactions were unanimous: (a) it is the most compre-

hensive coverage of that particular subject to be found anywhere today, and because it is based on programs now found in California it is particularly useful in teacher preparation as well as for classroom teachers; (b) we need equally fine volumes for later childhood and early adolescence. For some time we have needed a comprehensive definition of the scope and objectives of our elementary school program in California. There is nothing in this volume which denies or even attempts to deny the local school the privilege of planning its own program. The framework which has been suggested is most welcome.

Said a Professor of Education in a great California University:

I believe that this publication is one of the most mature documents professionally ever to be published. It certainly is one of the most useful. It combines in a volume the kind of talents that no private publication can ever afford to put together. Having been in public education in California for over twenty-five years, I understand . . . the kind of experience and talent and thought and dedication that have gone into the content of this volume. I . . . intend to use it as a basic text in the training of our candidates for the elementary teaching credential . . .

Said a Bay area county superintendent of schools:

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I have thoroughly examined with members of my staff your recent publication: *Teachers Guide to Education in Early Childhood*. The publication not only gives direction to education in California, but presents an undertone of feeling in regard to children that exemplifies a modern approach to elementary education.

Two superintendents from mountain counties said:

May I say how enthusiastic I am about this publication? It is an outstanding compilation of material on the early years of childhood.

Congratulations for the outstanding publication . . . thanks to the many who have contributed so even a small county may have the finest curriculum material.

Said directors of elementary education, curriculum co-ordinators, and supervisors in California school districts and offices of county superintendents of schools:

The *Teachers Guide to Education in Early Childhood* is delightful . . . a grand job of weaving together the work of many contributors into a continuous story of a good curriculum for children. It makes interesting reading but, more important, it is sound and should prove tremendously helpful to all of us. The chapter headings carry a punch. The captions are fresh and colorful. The illustrations are exceptionally good and well placed. We are proud and pleased to use the guide with parents as well as with teachers.

First of all, the Guide is a fine book and has been long needed in our profession. It is an excellent book because it contains so many facets of the program of teaching. It gives a good explanation of the phases of child development. It gets into the psychology of learning and backs it up with the necessary research. These facets are then developed into teaching and

learning methods. It gives a good resumé of the learning activities of the primary child. Evaluation, individual differences, and housing are also included. Having all this and more, too, under one cover is wonderful. My wife is a primary teacher . . . she says she really gets inspired about her job when she reads it.

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We feel this Guide is truly an excellent contribution and a very timely one. The principals are introducing the book to their staffs as part of a total in-service program. Teachers are receiving it enthusiastically.

.
We are thrilled with the recent publication. It contains a wealth of material for our teachers.

.
The new publication has been received with enthusiasm and interest. It should be gratifying to have the results of the efforts and planning that went into this successful publication mean so much to teachers.

.
We have been introducing the Guide. Teachers are most enthusiastic. We have found the material helpful in planning for parent conferences . . . this guide fulfills a need that many teachers have felt for some time.

.
This is a wonderful contribution that will be of inestimable help to California teachers.

.
We have introduced the Guide to our staff in the district; it has been received with real enthusiasm.

Said the Executive Secretary of a great national professional organization:

The Guide is a splendid resource volume.

Said a state director of elementary education from a western state:

While in Washington last week to attend the President's Committee on Migrant Labor, I spent a few hours in the U. S. Office of Education. There, the new publication from California, *Teachers Guide to Education in Early Childhood* was mentioned in glowing terms. What a nice surprise to return to find the volume on my desk. The new publication represents to me the new philosophy in state guides, that of being built on basic understanding of children rather than on items to be taught. The format is excellent, the lovely pictures intriguing, and the whole so readable and interesting that I find myself lost in the pages.

Said a national specialist in early childhood education:

I want to tell you how extremely happy I am this volume has been published for the field. I consider it excellent and know it will make a most worth-while contribution. I took it with me to a meeting in Pittsburgh last week and have referred it to the Minnesota State Department of Education. I am recommending it to University City (Missouri) Schools as a basis for the evaluation of their program. So, you see in just the few days I have had it, it already has proved to be the answer for many questions and problems . . . an excellent job in a much needed field.

Our purpose in quoting from the correspondence received concerning the *Teachers Guide to Education in Early Childhood* does not emanate from any lack of modesty in sharing "fan mail." So many California educators participated in the preparation of the Guide that they should know that their efforts are appreciated.

The State of California has a great investment in this volume not only in the actual cost of production but in the time and energy of our State's professional resources. The investment will yield dividends as the Guide is wisely used:

1. In the professional preparation of prospective teachers for service in kindergarten, grades one, two, and three
2. In the professional preparation of school administrators, supervisors, and guidance personnel for service to California's young children
3. In the in-service education of all who serve as professional workers in the education of young children
4. In the interpretation of a sound program of education to all California citizens
5. In providing a basis of evaluation of programs of early childhood education in California and elsewhere in the nation
6. In providing a bench mark from which further study and research may be carried on to improve the educational offering in the development of young children

To be of greatest service to the elementary schools of California, the Bureau of Elementary Education needs to know the reaction of teachers, principals, supervisors, college and university instructors to the publication and the methods being used to introduce the Guide into schools and professional education programs.

ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDHOOD EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL

The California Association for Childhood Education will be host to the annual Conference of the Association for Childhood Education International in Los Angeles April 21-26 at two official hotels—the Biltmore and the Statler.

The association has not met in California since 1941. The theme of the conference, "That All Children May Learn," directs attention to the major responsibility of the teacher in the guidance of learning. Over eight thousand California teachers are active members of the state and international association.

THEATER FOR CHILDREN IN SANTA MONICA

MRS. GENE NIELSON OWEN, *Head, Theater Arts Department*
Santa Monica City College

It is a delightful opportunity for members of the Theater Arts Department of Santa Monica City College to explain the part that the college plays in the Santa Monica Theater for Children project to the wide audience of elementary school educators served by the *California Journal of Elementary Education*. With readers who have close contact with children and know them well, the college Theater Arts Department shares strong common ground—respect for children. Its members are increasingly aware of how responsive, eager, and rewarding children can be when their attention is held and when they are invited to express their appreciation and critical appraisal of what is presented to them in a dramatic performance. The theater arts staff believes that an audience of children deserves the best that can be prepared for them, although its members are aware that children are frequently shown presentations much below their ability to understand and appreciate.

"Anything goes!" is a common opinion of some individuals when thinking in terms of theater fare for children. This reaction comes from people who have had little contact with children. A few adults are frankly surprised at the quality of the Santa Monica City College productions and exclaim, "Why do you do all that work for children? They would like anything!" Nor is this reaction to theater material for children merely a local one. On a Greek ship last summer, the author, her husband, and twelve-year-old daughter heard about an old form of puppet "shadow theater," which was playing in Athens. All were eager to see it, and upon reaching Athens tried to locate the theater, but were told, "Oh, you don't want to see that. It's only for children!"

This disregard for the child audience was expressed even at the launching of the theater for children among college students. One young man stated, "I wouldn't want to act for children. You could never tell if you were good or bad. They like anything!" Another young man, warned by his theatrical agent not to play in that "stuff" for

children, was told, "All you have to do for them is overact!" The other day, a graduate who played in last year's production, "I'd Rather Be a Horse," told the current cast of "Clowns Around," that "the most revealing thing to me in playing for children was the discovery that I had underestimated them!"

College students seldom have elementary school-age brothers and sisters and often have no contact with children. In a few years they

may have children of their own, but at the moment they are between stages in their contacts with children. Consequently, it is a marvelous revelation in their lives to re-establish communication with children and to learn again firsthand of the wonder, surprise, and radiance of the child's reaction. Preparing plays for children reawakens for the college student the child's world. As soon as the college actor is allowed to peek into that fresh world of magnificent response and immediate reaction, he has an experience that he will remember all his life. Perhaps it will make him a better parent some day. At least, he will never be guilty of the comment that for children "anything goes!"



"Clowns Around" played to an audience of 5600.

From the beginning of the project in offering theater fare to children the Theater Arts Department has subscribed to the philosophy that only the best, the most mature, and the most creative effort that could be made was worthy of the audience of children the productions attracted. That this effort has been rewarded is illustrated by the fact that the most recent production, "Clowns Around," played to an audience of 5,600 children and their parents. Each year five college theater arts workshop classes expend great effort to provide a handsomely mounted, full-scale production for children of the community. A faculty staff of three provides supervision of these workshops: the technical

director, who is in charge of the workshops which build the sets and provide the lighting for the plays; the instructor who supervises workshops in costume and make-up; and the director of the acting workshop. Almost a hundred college students are enrolled in these workshop classes and contribute time and talent to the project of producing plays for children.

HOW THE PROJECT BEGAN

In the spring semester of 1952, Santa Monica City College moved to its new campus and occupied its new buildings, among them the Little Theater. This compact Little Theater offered an ideal setting for children to be introduced to the exciting adventure of the living drama. A child sitting in any one of the 350 seats could easily see the stage and clearly hear the dialogue.

Other factors in the design of the Little Theater made it most effective for productions for children. Space and flexibility were provided by the large backstage area, an elevator forestage, a pit in the forestage, a radio-control booth adjacent to the stage, and in front of the building an inviting patio. Each of these facilities has been used advantageously. The deep backstage provides opportunity to build sets, one behind the other, thus allowing for a continuous flow of action in the uninterrupted hour of the play. In "The Magic Riddle," for instance, the first scene was a shallow "cave of evil." The second scene, a village street, was set up behind it, and finally the third setting, a palace garden, was built to the back wall of the theater, a distance of 50 feet. This setting had such depth and beauty that one child gasped, "Oh, it's 3-D!"

The elevator forestage is used in every production to bring action in front of the curtain while the next scene is being readied behind the drapes. In the "Ugly Duckling," the forestage moved down right before the eyes of the children as though impelled by a wave of the Mistress of the Revel's magic wand. The pit in the forestage has also been used as an integral part of the productions. This "lower region" has been a beehive in "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe," and the Ogre's passage into his Cave of Evil in "The Magic Riddle."

The proximity of the radio-control booth to the stage has enabled the children's plays to be punctuated with sound effects of thunder, wind, and rain and to be underscored with recorded music. Passages from "The Planets" by Holst accompanied "The Magic Riddle" production. Original music has been written for the productions of "T'd

Rather Be a Horse" and "Clowns Around" and played on the organ and the piano in the Little Theater. And finally, a patio in front of the theater has provided the space for the successful autograph parties, which follow each performance.

The next step was to organize and to work co-operatively with the parent groups of the community and with the elementary school teachers and principals on ticket sales and publicity. That Santa Monica has achieved such close co-operation from all segments of the school system and with the parent groups on this project of offering plays to children would indicate that a public school system provides an excellent organization for the successful operation of such a plan. However, Santa Monica is the only public school system in America known to the author which has established theater for children within its own organization with different segments serving each other. If the success of the Santa Monica experiment is a criterion, it would seem that many public school systems could have a children's theater with students at the secondary level offering productions for children in the elementary grades and the children in the elementary grades providing

the appreciative audience so essential to the development of dramatic talent in the older group.

Children have an "autograph" party with the cast.



Co-operation within the schools and with parents is vital to the success of a children's theater. The elementary schools get news of the play to the children, and the parents support attendance. Without such an arrangement, a fine play might be offered, but few children would be in the theater to see it. The immediate difficulty that a professional company might encounter is getting information about a production directly to the children for whom it is intended. A college director in a neighboring community, discouraged by the small attendance at his first production for children, exclaimed,

"We put it on, but nobody came to see it!" Obviously, in this case the organizational planning and co-operation within the segments of the school system had not been given sufficient attention before launching the project.

In reflecting on the Santa Monica Theater for Children, it would appear that everything was favorable for success. The facilities were ideal; the contact between parents, elementary school teachers and principals, and the City College were direct and harmonious; the college production group was available; and the audience of children was waiting. That the children were eager for the theater experience is borne out in the response they have made to it. Clearly, a need existed for theater fare designed and prepared directly for children, and the handsome productions offered by the Theater Arts Department of the college satisfied the demand.



Children are invited to evaluate the play.

EXPERIMENTATION AND FRESHNESS TO APPROACH

From the start, the approach taken was frankly experimental. Many innovations were incorporated and discoveries made as the project grew. Since no similar public school system approach to children's theater could be found, the group could not be greatly influenced by other ventures or established precedents. The uniqueness of the situation kept the outlook of all participants fresh. In trying to find out what was functional the following beliefs emerged:

1. Once the play began, it should not stop. Intermissions tended to tire rather than to rest the child. It was better to get attention and hold it with no breaks or interruptions.
2. The performance should run for an hour to an hour and ten minutes.

3. The children should have an opportunity to mingle with the cast. The answer to this was an autograph party following the play, at which time autographs of the actors could be collected in the space provided on the back of the program.
4. The production should be within the price range of all children, making it available to the entire community and to large families. Admission to the first play given was 25 cents. The next year, 1956, the admission was set at 35 cents.
5. In addition to Saturday matinees, an early Friday evening production should be offered at 7:30, called the "Family Night Show."
6. Control and education of the audience should be provided by the "Mistress of the Revels," who greets the children at the beginning of the play, sits with them during the production, and dismisses them in orderly fashion at the end of the performance.

REACTIONS OF THE CHILDREN

The revealing comments and reaction of the children are the finest reward the college student can have for his effort in preparing a full-scale production for them. As he looks down into the children's faces, the young college adult knows that all his work has been worth while.

A group of children from Edison Elementary School was brought by the principal to see a preview production of "I'd Rather Be a Horse" in order to give the college players an opportunity to hear audience reactions. Children from every grade level were included and all responded with critical evaluation of the play. Their delight in strong physical action is evident by their comments. Their observations about the rain and thunder were particularly interesting because there was no rain and the thunder didn't turn out well. The children clearly understood the theme of the play that it's best to be just what you are. They made telling comments about some of the television fare served to them by way of contrast and comparison. The following questions and answers are taken from a tape recording made of the session following the play.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS AFTER PREVIEW PERFORMANCE OF "I'D RATHER BE A HORSE"

Q: Exactly what part of the play did you like?

A: The best part was the horse and one of the donkeys kicking that bad man.

A: The story was humorous and enjoyable. It held interest and was a good length.

A: I have a suggestion. Don't you think that when Don Key Hote told the villain to get off the stage, he could have fired a few shots . . . like caps?

Q: Is there anything you would like to have changed? Any improvements?

A: When the judge said, "I don't like this rain," he could have stomped his foot.

Q: Did you believe it was raining?

A: No.

Q: Why not?

A: Because it didn't show rain.

Q: What would you like to have to make it show rain?

A: (A first grader) Rain!

Q: Did you think it was thundering?

A: Yes

A: The thunder had a tinny sound, though. (A sheet of tin was used as an emergency.)

Q: Would you rather have Don Key become a horse or stay a donkey?

A: Stay a donkey!

Q: Why?

A: Because I think he's just all right as he is.

Q: Did you get disgusted with Don Key because he didn't think so much of himself? Were you discouraged with him?

A: No!

A: How come he turned over and sat on the bucket, because he might have spilled everything?

A: (A first grader) I liked the part when the donkey cwied . . . because it weally seemed like weal cwyng.

Q: Did you like to have a little person in the play?

NOTE: One child plays with the college students. It has been Barrie Owen for the last four years because her parents are busy on the play week-ends and late afternoons and want to keep her with them.)

A: Yes!

Q: Why?

A: Well, we are "little people," I guess we should say, and I guess we feel better if someone our age is in the play, just like us.

Q: Would you rather see a story like "Alice in Wonderland" for which you know the ending, or would you rather see a new play the ending of which you don't know? Which one?

A: New play!

Q: How many of you would like to see a new one? Say "yes."

A: Yes!

Q: How many of you would like to see an old play, one for which you know the ending?

A: (No answer)

Q: Nobody? Let's have a reason why?

A: A new play that you've never seen is more exciting than the other ones.

A: I think the new play is more exciting because when I hear a play that I've seen before, then I just don't want to see them. I go in the back room.

A: I think we should have new plays because they've showed "Alice in Wonderland" on television so much, everybody knows it.

A: I don't like the old shows because you see them so much you get too tired of them, and you don't like them any more.

During the autograph party the children express their identity with the characters and their reaction to elements in the play. To the college students this is one of the fascinating experiences they have in performing

for children. The actors kept a record of some of the questions the children asked them. A scissors-grinder in one of the early plays was asked to come to the home of one of the children to sharpen his mother's knives, which were "always dull!" A prince and princess who were married in "The Ugly Duckling" were asked by the children if they were going to live in an apartment in Santa Monica and send their children to the Santa Monica schools. The tails of the horses in "I'd Rather Be a Horse" came in for much comment from the youngsters. The

The back of the "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie, and Lots Moe" program allowed space for cast autographs.

Autographs



great stallion, King, was asked by a little girl if he really grew his handsome silver tail. He said he grew it just for the play. A little boy, overhearing the conversation said, "I don't believe it," whereupon the girl turned on him indignantly. "If King says he grew a tail, he grew a tail!" she said and walked away. Often the thoroughbred fillies in the play were asked why they treated the little donkey so badly and if they were still mad at him. After collecting the autograph of Filly O'Sole, one sixth grade child shyly handed her two lumps of sugar! During the race scene in the play, two of the fillies jumped off the stage and refused to run because it was raining. One disgusted child called out to them, "Chicken!" The donkeys were great favorites with the children, who wanted to know if the donkeys were really cousins, if they had always lived in Texas, and if the guns were real. Don Key Hote asked one little girl if she had ever talked to a donkey before. She nodded emphatically and said, "Oh, yes!" and pointed over to Don Key. One little boy showed considerable disgust when he overheard Don Key's grandmother call him "Bobby." He muttered audibly, "I thought Don Key was his name." The beautiful Doll Key had two young admirers who waited till all the other youngsters had gone, then said, "Will you please teach us to walk and hee-haw like a donkey?" And one boy told her that the thing he liked best in the whole play was when Don Key talked back to the fillies. Doll Key replied, "I bet you have sisters!" Amazed, he said, "You guessed it!"

From these comments one can see that if the productions delight the children, their response is a great pleasure to the college student. From the eager attendance at the plays the college student has the valuable experience of playing a long "run" of performances extended over four week-ends. And judging from the inquiries and demand for tickets that continue after the show has closed, the "run" could be extended. From his direct contact with the responsive child the college actor learns how to project his role with skill and vitality.

But even beyond the technical skills he may perfect, the college student experiences from his young audience an identification, an empathy for what he is doing. The college actors repeatedly comment about this "difference of feeling" they get from an audience of children compared with that from an audience of adults. One student summed it up: "Children show greater awareness than adults. You have a strong contact with the child audience. When the children get excited, it excites me!" Perhaps that is the essence of the reward to all adults who work at bringing an experience in live theater to children—it is exciting!

WRITING PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

HAL OWEN, *Education Television Specialist,
Los Angeles Public Schools*

Although my wife and I have always been interested in theater and particularly theater for children, we were never primarily writers. As parents we became concerned over the customary theatrical fare offered to children, and from that concern came our decision to try to write plays which would meet the child's needs and desires. We started with a few basic observations. We had noticed that in many plays the normal attention span of the child audience has been constantly ignored, and that intermissions were more distracting than relaxing. We had been told by children that they would rather watch new stories than a rehash of plots with which they were already familiar. We knew that if college students were to present the plays, their attention also had to be held by the material. If the college students could be kept interested, so might the parents become intrigued enough to remain and see the production with their children. With these ideas guiding us, we started to write.

While not exactly novices, having written a series of 15-minute episodes for television attempting to interest both adults and children, we certainly were not old hands at playwriting. In our television series called "The Gene Owen Tale Spinners," my wife adapted several episodes from *Alice in Wonderland* and other classics familiar to young people. These were moderately successful, but we were still unsatisfied with the reactions of children to the programs. They asked, "What is a 'whiting,' a 'griffin,' a 'mock turtle?'" Following these adaptations we turned to original scripts prepared by a professional writer. The results were more to our liking, but the scripts still were not completely satisfactory. They were not written with the care they might have received were they aimed at adults. The writer thought us most demanding when we suggested that material for children deserved equal effort to that written for adults. Much time was spent in rewriting and editing the scripts before we used them. One day, out of desperation, we decided to write our own television episodes, thereby embarking on an entirely new career. Not only were both of us college teachers, but we

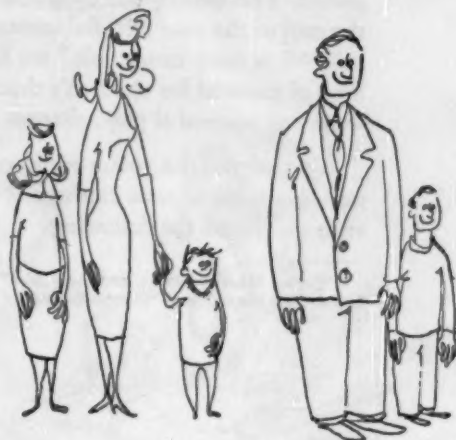
were now writers, actors, producers, costumers, and directors of our own children's show in the then new, exciting medium of television. To our grateful surprise the response to our material far surpassed the previous cuttings of *Alice in Wonderland* and the scripts written for us. We felt that we were now on the right track of what children enjoyed in theatrical fare.

However, trying to write and produce a weekly television show is a full-time job. So there came a time when we were forced to make a choice between television and teaching. It could not be both. The monetary temptation to stay in the entertainment field was great, but we enjoy our college jobs, so the choice to remain in teaching was easy to make. At that time we had no idea how much we had learned about writing for children, but the television experience was soon to stand us in excellent stead.

Santa Monica City was then building their new and modern college campus. It included the intimate Little Theater, which was an ideal setting where Santa Monica children could be introduced to the delights of live theater.

Again the search for suitable material for such a project started. All of the tried plays were read, discussed, and discarded. The fables and fairy tales were discarded. Such material as "Cinderella" or "Rumplestiltskin" would not challenge the college actor nor hold the attention of the parents. Children, too, preferred something new. There was then, and there still is a dearth of plays suitable for children which encompass our philosophy. We wanted a play which would amuse, teach a little, and have a genuine theme or moral without being obvious or without "talking down" to the young theater-goer. We felt that he had a right to demand something stimulating, exciting, yet succinct. We wanted him to leave the theater with a desire to return. After perusing countless scripts we decided upon A. A. Milne's one-act play, "The Ugly Duckling." It was not exactly what we were seeking: it was too short, it

Parents became interested enough to stay and see the show with their children.



was British and thus had many references outside the experience of American children. Mrs. Owen started to work on it in order to build it to the required one-hour length and to make it more meaningful to American children. With the addition of a marriage ceremony and entertainment and some vocabulary revision, the play met most of the specifications.

In all but one particular "The Ugly Duckling" held the interest of the young audience. A romantic scene, essential to the plot, was wordy and too long. During this love scene many children found it expedient to get permission from the Mistress of the Revels to leave the room. Generally, however, the play was well received, and the Theater for Children was born. Children, parents, and actors knew at once that they were in on the beginning of a community tradition.

But all too soon the question of material was again upon us. If the experiment were to continue, new plays were needed. From the Milne play it was evident what a child audience enjoys and, even more important, what it doesn't like. We thought the formula we had used successfully on television might be expanded into a stage production; so again we took the matter into our own literary hands. Borrowing boldly from our television series, we wrote the first play about a family of mice, three little girls, and their daddy—a middle-aged juvenile delinquent. It became "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe." We checked almost weekly with our friend and playwright, John Balderston, of "Berkeley Square" fame. He cautioned, "I don't know much about this sort of writing, but I imagine that you treat children with the same respect that you treat adults." Accepting this premise and his valuable comments, we felt that in "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe" we had a show that would hold the interest of child, actor, and parent. The mouse comedy played to nine full houses, and when, at the end of the run, Mr. Balderston recited an old axiom of show business, "You can't close a hit," we knew that our judgment of the right kind of material for children's theater had been vindicated. If we could write one successful play, chances are that we could write more.¹

We analyzed the young audiences critically. Laughs, squeals, restlessness, inattention, were catalogued for future reference. This first audience taught us the following.

¹ "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe" was followed by "The Magic Riddle," "I'd Rather Be a Horse," and "Clowns Around."

1. We should keep love interest to a minimum. The children enjoy lovely ladies and handsome men but are embarrassed and disinterested if too much show or even talk of affection occurs.
2. Children love variety in action.
3. No one character should say too much in any one speech. Speeches should be short, developing one idea at a time.
4. The action should be kept up and the talk down. Broad action, including sprawls on the floor, awkward falls, kicks, fights, and stylized pantomime, are the most fascinating of stage activities.
5. Redundancies should be avoided. If the exposition is stated once, clearly and distinctly, the attention of the audience is held and the suspense builds. No trouble holding attention occurs when the child knows he might miss something important if he doesn't listen. We have our own built-in critic, our twelve-year-old daughter, Barrie, who is always ready with advice. When she says, "But you already said *that*," the excess wordage comes out.
6. One doesn't have to "talk down" to children. We attended a play for children which started with such an inane phrase as, "Hello on you!" I suppose this was designed to elicit a response of, "Hello on you too!" In another show for children an obvious villain entered and said directly, "I'm bad. I do mean things. Everybody hates me."

Although often aware that subtleties and nuances are lost on some children, we yield to the temptation of naming characters such as the feminine horses in "I'd Rather Be a Horse" — Filly Mignon, Filly O'Sole, and Filly Del Fia. We called the Texas burro in the same show Don Key Hote, knowing that most children do not fully understand the reference. Ali Khat was the feline villain in "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe." The children seemed to enjoy merely the sound of the names, but the adults and college cast were captivated by them.

Children want the villain to be brought to justice, physically, if possible.



After "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe" we decided to write another play, this time a modern allegory, "The Magic Riddle," in which a young magician frees himself from evil. In this production we used the tricky device of audience participation. The hero had to unravel a riddle. This he did by meeting and overcoming obstacles. The final step to freedom, however, was resolved by the child audience itself. They had to answer "yes" to the question of whether the magician should be allowed to go free. Their response was so enthusiastic that they felt they had been responsible for his escape from evil.

From this play we drew additional conclusions as to what good theater for children should be. We recognized that continued and varied action was essential, but we now knew that any show for children

must *begin* with movement. Wordy exposition would not be tolerated by a group of critical children. We found that although they enjoy broad comedy they also enjoy pathos and changes to serious moods. They love to sympathize with the "good" characters. While the hero or other kind characters can have foibles and still captivate the child, the villain should be hated. And he must be brought to justice, physically, if possible. If he falls, or loses a fight or has some ignominy heaped upon him, the children cheer. Ali Khat was caught in an over-sized mousetrap. Gentleman Jim was kicked across stage by every horse and donkey he had mistreated. In "Clowns Around," the Ringmaster was knocked down and pounced upon by the lovable lion.

The child seems to enjoy current references to popular television shows, or to places and things with which he is familiar. Gaylord-

"Clowns Around" was rewritten eleven times before it was produced.



Percy, the pampered cat in "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe," received the award of "Cat-of-the-year in Santa Monica," much to the delight of the children. They laughed appreciatively at Don Key Hote's singing, "You should have seen me grin when they traded me in for a '56 Cadillac!"

Our young audiences feel great rapport with animals portrayed on the stage. We were told by parents that their youngsters went buzzing through the house for weeks after watching the bees in "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe," and later brayed in imitation of the donkeys. Children identify with fantasy as adults seldom can. They also have a feeling of kinship with a child in the play. They respond to music and songs, so original music has been composed for the last two plays.

Each time, we think, that the writing of plays for children should get easier, but we find ourselves challenging everything we write on the grounds, "Is it good enough for children?" The last play, "Clowns Around," was the most difficult of all. The first act was rewritten eleven times before it was put into production. All through rehearsals revisions are made; lines are edited, cut, and altered. We know that glibness of humor is not enough, nor is a facile pen. There is much more than that to writing plays for children. There must be a healthy theme or moral that the children can grasp. They should leave the theater better citizens for having attended. In an educational environment, poor grammar is out of place, so the entire cast uses good English, regardless of the roles being played.

Writing for children is a creative labor of love. The effort that has to be made is considerable, but the rewards are incalculable. When a wide-eyed child with wonder in his entire being asks, "How did you teach the mice to talk?" we go home, look at each other, sigh, and start another play for next year.

COSTUME AND MAKE-UP FOR CHILDREN'S THEATER

MARY JEAN SUTCLIFFE, *Theater Arts Department,
Santa Monica City College*

A special challenge and creative experience comes each spring to the theater arts students of Santa Monica City College, for then the entire department is bustling with activity centered around the production of a new play for children. The script is read eagerly by students in the workshop classes of costume, make-up, staging and lighting, with the knowledge that they will be the artist-creators who design the production. Since the children's plays deal with unusual characters, animals, creatures of fantasy, or people from other centuries, the students are aware of the special talents they must possess to create costumes for this type of production. In every play for children problems in design occur for which no formulas or no set patterns are available. Very often, students will be called upon to devise some costume or make-up mask that requires ingenious experimentation. The challenge is to enchant the imagination of the children and still have the costume or mask be practical for use by the actor who must play the role.

Designing the costumes and make-up for any play is always a carefully studied and intricate problem. The student artist who is responsible for creating a costume and make-up for a given character must do a vast amount of research about the character, the period, and the physical and emotional requirements of the role. However, in creating costumes for children's theater, a new dimension is added to the problem-solving activity of design. The students must learn to see through the eyes of children, imagine what their audiences will accept as authentic in the way of animal costumes and make-up, decide what will delight them most from the visual aspects of the production. Learning to see through the eyes and think through the minds of children is a challenge to which the college students rise with enthusiasm, for this is a world not limited by the sophisticated tastes of adults who, for the most part, require realism.

To explain the unique problems which have engaged students in the costume classes, a few of the characters from our recent plays are

illustrative. In "The Magic Riddle"—a play set in the mediaeval period—witches, villagers, a magician, a king, a queen, a princess, an ogre, and a sprite people the stage. The human beings had to be costumed in the garb of the mediaeval period which involved research on the dress of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. But the costume of an ogre, witch or sprite knows no century, so imagination could have a free rein.

Since the witches were extremely active and free in their dance-

The Ogre's costume was made of animal skins and stylized mediaeval tunic.



Black nylon and crepe strips gave witches a spider-like movement.

like movement, costumes were designed in strips of black nylon and crepe to move in spider-like patterns as the witches danced. No particular image is associated with an ogre, and consequently the costume of this evil character was constructed of animal skins to suggest bestial qualities of his wickedness. Over this he wore a stylized mediaeval tunic with jagged edges. The petite sprite, who was the feminine creature of the play, was clothed in a ballerina costume and colored in green from head to toe. The color was symbolic of her woodland character, while the ballerina costume was chosen because little girls are always delighted by the graceful and fluffy appearance of dancers. In fact, the ballerina costume, in many variations, is often used because of its popularity with children.

The make-up class, too, had its special problems in creating facial characterizations for the witches, ogre, and sprite that would be colorful, believable, and appropriate. Witches' faces can be imagined in most any color from red to black. The group decided upon the cold color



Children love the fluffy, graceful appearance of the ballerina costume.

of grey and then built the grotesque features of the nose, chin, and eyes with mortician's wax. These features were firmly fixed and balanced so they would not fall off during the strenuous movements of the actresses. The ogre's face was made to appear cruel. He was given large features. The sprite, however, was a particular problem since her make-up was in shades of green, a color which is not flattering. Since we wanted her to appear beautiful, the blending of flesh tones, pink cheeks, and sparkling eye-shadow required particular skill and much experimentation to use the tint of green and keep the beauty of the actress.

Perhaps the most inventive costume constructions and make-up designs confronting a college production class were those of the horses and donkeys in the production, "I'd Rather Be a Horse." In the stable of a farmhouse, three racing fillies, a stallion, two donkeys, and a pink and white girl donkey became the key characters of this fantasy. Since each horse was to be depicted by one person rather than by two people, the costume had to be designed to

represent the outline of the horse and capture the magnificent elegance of thoroughbred animals. The students worked tirelessly on the construction of a costume that would suggest the proud graceful movements of a racing horse and would have the silhouette of the arched tail and neck of a beautiful animal. Only through hours of experimentation and many failures was the happy solution found for the construction of the tail. An inventive student discovered that a flag-holder would solve the problem. Worn on the end of the spine and strapped about the waist, it was sturdy enough to hold the weight of a steel shaft bent to support the curved arch of a heavy tail made of unwound rope. Additional weeks of trial and error produced a head-piece that was effective for the donkey's ears. Because the donkey's ears are large and the fabric out of which the hooded neckpieces were made was soft to conform to the shape of the actor's head, some device to support the ears was necessary. After extensive experimentation with

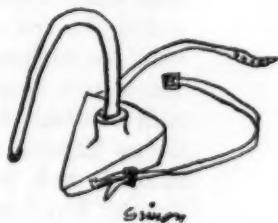
wire and frames, the problem was met when one student hit upon the idea of using a war-surplus flight headgear as an inner helmet on which the ears could be fastened securely and arranged at an angle that was suitable to the personality of the donkey. The outside hood was then fitted over the helmet and slots cut through which the ears were drawn. Thus the ears were a stable part of the donkey's head.

While the construction problems were different from those of most costume classes, the designing of the colors and trims to make the total animal costumes was no less unusual. Feathers were used for the elegant horses' manes. Polished hemp carefully dyed, prepared, and sewed was used for all the tails as well as for the donkey's stubby manes. All costumes were dyed in specially mixed baths to produce the colors of a sorrel, a dapple-grey, and a palomino. The female donkey, Doll Key, was pink and white, a fantastic color for a fantasy animal. She became the adored creature of all the children, a living image of a nursery animal to be cuddled.

In make-up, the problems of creating horses and donkeys were almost greater than those of creating costumes. Since the actor's face is the most expressive part of his body, wearing animal masks was not accept-



A flag-holder was used in constructing the horse's tail.





Students create their own unique clown masks.

able. Therefore, the class began the creative process of molding human features into the suggestion of horses and donkeys without destroying the beauty of the face. Children are eager to see pretty girls and handsome men. So, adapting the features of a human face to the long bone structure of a horse was no small problem. After many experiences with molding features, using putty and plastic construction, we settled for the simple, but infinitely more effective

use of subtle color shadings to match the costumes and a suggested muzzle about the mouth through the use of a lighter highlight which did not destroy the physical attractiveness of the actor.

In the production, "Clowns Around," for which we designed costumes and make-up, the children's experience of make-believe in the theater included a variety of familiar but original characters from the circus. The glamour and color of the circus was depicted in the most extravagant and lavish costumes yet produced. Generously supplied with a budget built up by ticket sales from previous productions, the students were able to construct costumes from beautiful sequin fabrics, nylon nets, silks and satins to give the children authentic and elaborate experiences in theater magic. Besides the spectacular quality of the circus acts, special problems required solution for which there is no costume book to consult, no make-up chart to follow. Among the exotic personalities of circus folk is a lion whose personality dominates much of the stage action. Creating on the face of the student actor a make-up which is that of a lion and a headpiece and mane that is believable has provided the students with exercises in make-up artistry calling for much imagination. In addition, three clowns in the play are distinctive types, each of which has taken careful planning and original thinking to design. Knowing that every professional clown devises and patents his make-up mask, jealously guarding the distinctive features which distinguish him from all other clowns of the circus world, the students have created their own unique clown masks. They are as inventive and delightful as the faces of any of the professional clowns.

Creating theater for children has proved to be a rich experience for the people on both sides of the footlights. Ever-increasing demands for additional performances each year and the enthusiastic responses of the children have been a happy reward to the college students who have met and solved with imagination and ingenuity the unusual problems in costume, make-up, and staging. Besides all the basic skills of construction and technique which the student must know to design for any given play, the students in the spring workshop classes must invent new constructions and costume creations for the original children's productions. As fantasy characters mingle with the human beings on stage, creating an hour of wonderment, so must the costumes and make-up create visual enchantment, weaving the unreal and real into a pictorial unity.

SETTINGS AND LIGHTING FOR CHILDREN'S THEATER

W. HOWARD WILSON, *Art Instructor, Santa Monica City College;
and Technical Director of Children's Theater*

In the preparation of the technical phase of design and construction of settings for a children's theater, the approach is a very serious one. The casual observer might consider a play for children to be of secondary importance to a play for adults in terms of effort to be expended, but this is not the case at Santa Monica City College. All attention is pointed to a complete and finished production. The college has found that when the theater experience is well prepared for them, children are appreciative and eager to participate as audience members.

The director of the plays for children has found that the production must move along rapidly and not last too long. Technically this poses some problems for changing of settings. Those familiar with the typical three-act play are aware that sets are usually changed during intermissions, but in the children's theater there are no intermissions. Hence other plans must be made for scene changing. One solution is to continue the action of the play on the forestage while the setting is changed behind the closed curtain. The stage crew often has about five minutes to shift scenery behind the curtain, while the story continues to hold the attention of the children in front of the curtain. The crew must work quietly and quickly to effect the change, but when the curtain opens again and the new setting is in place, the gasps of the young audience are a reward. Another solution for the changing of settings, even though the play does not stop for intermissions, is to preplan and design the set pieces for quick moves. This is often done by putting them on rolling platforms or hidden wheels. Sometimes folding units permit more rapid set changes. This quick change in pictorial background holds the child's attention and stimulates his imagination.

The set is designed and constructed to augment the story action. In Milne's play, "The Ugly Duckling," all the action took place within the throne room of a castle. The fact that the setting did not change made for a certain restlessness among the children, particularly when the scene did not have strong physical action to hold their attention. All

of the subsequent plays have provided for a change of setting to help retain the children's interest. This change of background has been an aid in capturing and holding attention. For example, in "Eenie, Meenie, Mynie and Lots Moe" the play started with the cat's window-seat corner of the living room, changed to the kitchen home of the mice, then returned to the living room again. Not only did the settings change, but throughout the play over-sized furniture was used to make the adult-sized actors look small by comparison. A carpentry class in



Over-sized furniture makes adult-sized actors look small by comparison.

the college vocational division built stools, table, and arm chair to such a large scale that the actors looked as small as mice as they climbed up on the furniture. In the same play a trap door in the forestage became the home of two bees. As they emerged from their beehive, golden lighting did much to suggest their honey-comb background. They struggled very believably under the weight of a candy bar and a sack of jelly beans, because the props also were oversized.

In the next play, "The Magic Riddle," there were three set changes, although the action of the play was continuous. One setting wheeled off to reveal the next. Lighting played an important part in conveying the mood of the play, effectively contrasting the murky cave of the witches with the sunny gaiety of a village street. "Black light" was used in the cave scene, enabling luminous objects to "float" in space. Great puffs of smoke accompanied the ogre's entrance from the trap door of the forestage. Discharging tanks of carbon dioxide created this effect. In the last scene of the castle gardens lighting created a spectacular illusion. A turret in the castle wall suddenly became transparent and illuminated the forms of the ogre and the witches. It was a fitting climax to a play filled with magical effects. Many times the children's expression of wonder could be plainly heard backstage.

"T'd Rather Be a Horse," the next play, was filled with technical challenges to the college production students. In the race track scene



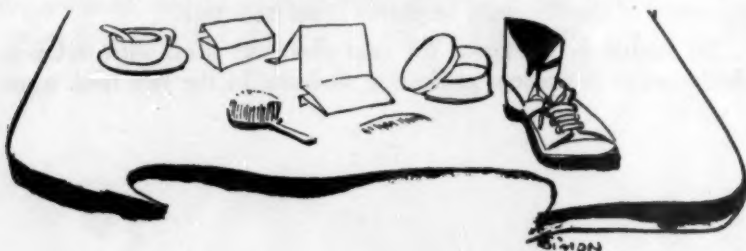
The children thought of "Clowns Around" as an actual circus.

a storm came up, causing the temperamental race horses to quit the race, thus allowing the sturdy donkey to plod through to win. Rain fell, lightning flashed, thunder rolled as the dramatic action mounted. Considerable equipment was necessary to achieve this spectacular effect. Occasionally it

didn't all work, but the child's investment of imagination filled in the gaps. Children want to believe and will quickly accept the stage illusion.

The last play, "Clowns Around," offered special opportunity for vivid lighting when the performers appeared under the Big Top. As each act came on, a spot light picked up the performer, emphasizing the glitter and color the child associates with the circus. The acrobats and trapeze artists were the epitome of visual splendor, handsomely costumed, and wonderfully appealing. As the "fliers" entered, a myriad of lights accompanied them, now bathing them in variegated color, now dropping to outline them in a dramatic silhouette. As the trapeze and swings lowered from the ceiling, then lifted again to carry the acrobats aloft, the lights accented the brilliant, theatrical act. As some of the children look back on their experience at the circus, "Clowns Around" may loom very large in their memory. They thought of the play as an actual circus, seeming not to miss the animals nor the menagerie, since they had the strong man, the lion tamer, the giant, the bearded lady, the clowns, and the acrobats.

It is interesting to design and build sets for an audience of children, for although they identify with strong elements of realism, their eager and imaginative minds respond to the realm of fantasy. Liberties with realism can be taken because the child can easily follow flights of fancy. Far from giving audiences of children less than is given to adults, so far as settings are concerned, there can be no let down in staging if children are to appreciate the wholesome experience and culture of good theater.



PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATIONS CO-OPERATE IN A CHILDREN'S THEATER PROJECT

MRS. RUTH FORNCROOK, *Santa Monica Council of
Parents and Teachers*

Bonaro Overstreet recently said, "We admit many characters to our living rooms via the television screen that we would never dream of letting in through the front door." Because parents all wish for something of greater cultural value than the entertainment media ordinarily available, the Santa Monica Council of Parents and Teachers was delighted when Mrs. Gene Owen presented plans concerning the children's plays which the drama department of Santa Monica City College hoped to produce. Parent-teacher association members have co-operated with the project in every possible way.

The following is the procedure the Santa Monica Council has pursued in organizing this co-operation. The chairman of the council and Mrs. Owen meet each year with the presidents of the parent-teacher associations of the various schools to explain the schedule of performances, sales of tickets, and ushering. At that time schools sign up to take charge of the ushering, take tickets, and otherwise assist in the management of one performance. Two parents or other adults take tickets at the outside door. One usher has been stationed at each aisle of the Little Theater. The helpers in these two groups serve as hostesses for the autograph party which follows each performance.

The tickets are bought from the Santa Monica City College business office by the schools' parent-teacher associations and are paid for in advance with parent-teacher association funds. The money is returned to each school's fund after the tickets are sold to the children. In certain schools the tickets are handled through the principal's office; in others, a table, manned by parent-teacher association members, is set up near the school entrance the day the tickets go on sale.

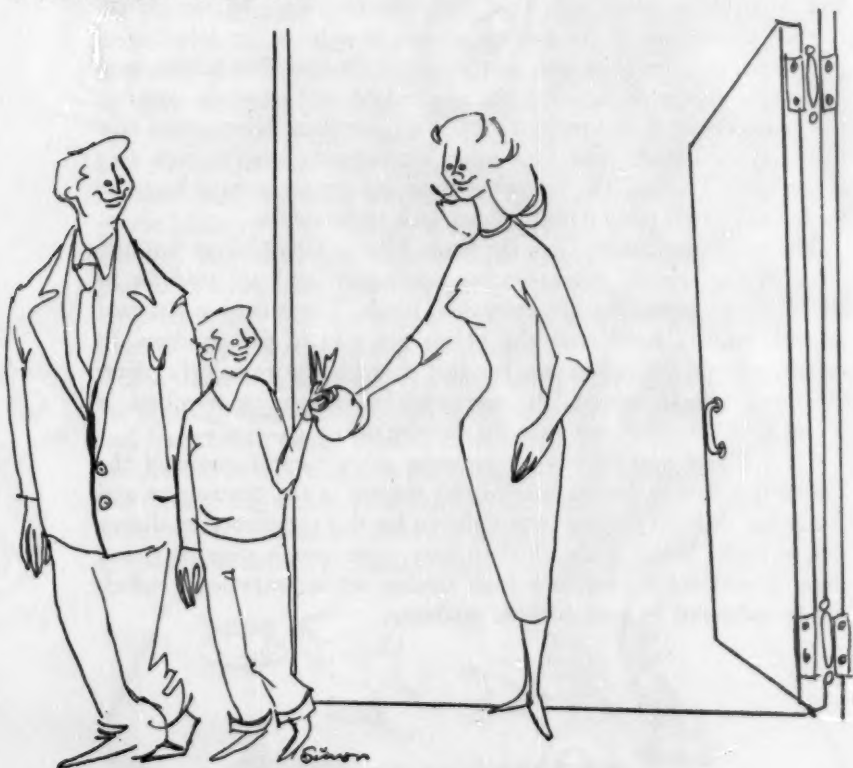
Council and unit officers try to make other parents aware of the special privilege in having a children's theater in the community and encourage them to prepare their children for this experience by discussion at home. Many of the children have never seen a stage play, and these performances provide a high quality artistic experience which can be enhanced by wise parental guidance.

When the children come to the theater they are expected to put on their company manners. Most of them arrive a little more dressed up, combed, and polished than when they are going to a motion picture.

The children are not allowed to eat anything inside the theater. Parents and teachers explain that it is not considered courteous to eat in the theater. All half-eaten apples, candy bars, and other snacks are confiscated at the door. The children may reclaim them at the close of the performance if they wish, but by that time more interesting ideas are usually occupying their thoughts.

One day a mother and her little boy rushed up to the door several minutes late. She gave him a candy bar and told him to go inside and eat it. The parent on duty at the door explained that this could not be. The mother became quite annoyed and said, "Why not, they do it in the movies?" However, when it was explained that one of the values of the children's theater was to train them in proper theater behavior, the mother agreed it was an excellent idea and commended the regulation.

All food is confiscated at the door.



The children of Santa Monica love this theater. Last year when "T'd Rather Be a Horse" was presented one eight-year-old boy saw practically every performance. At the first performance, he had a ticket. After that, he just made himself conspicuous near the door. Invariably, someone would have an extra ticket to give to him.

The members of the parent-teacher associations really help. They usher, sell tickets, take tickets at the door, help as hostesses at the autograph parties, help to publicize and create enthusiasm for the children's theater during parent-teacher meetings, and assist in making this theater experience worth while and enjoyable. Parents in Santa Monica feel very fortunate in having a children's theater and miss no opportunity to express appreciation to the teachers, principals, the Santa Monica City College, and Theater Arts Department faculty and students who devote time and effort far beyond the call of duty to provide a high standard of dramatic experience for the children of the community.

THE MAGIC RIDDLE

A Play for Children *

GENE AND HAL OWEN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BEEKA, one of the two witches who assist Master Live in his black art.

BULA, the other witch.

MASTER LIVE, an Ogre who rules the Cave of Evil.

DOOG, a young magician.

MINUS, a sprite, and constant companion of Doog.

GWENETH, a young maiden of the village.

ANN, a village maiden.

JANICE, a village maiden.

ZOREEN, a village maiden.

DIRK, a young man of the village.

DAME SEVERE, the mother of Gweneth.

KING HURTH, ruler of a mythical kingdom.

QUEEN CHRISTINE, his Queen.

PRINCESS PAMELA, their ten-year-old daughter.

SCENE ONE

A Cave of Evil. Dwelling of the Ogre and Witches.

(Closing of curtain denotes the passing of sixteen years.)

SCENE TWO

A village market street.

SCENE THREE

The garden of the Royal Palace.

SCENE ONE

The Cave of Evil, dwelling of the Ogre and the Witches. Both R and L of center are two large rocks, built with stepping levels so the Witches can climb and perch on them. There is a crib, up C, built about two feet high and decorated with suitable black art. Vapors rise from unexpected areas, giving the scene a mysterious, ominous aspect.

As the curtain opens, Beeka and Bula are seen in an eerie witch-dance, using the crib as a focal point. Smoke-puffs explode at their direction, as the dance

* Permission to perform this play must be secured from Gene Owen, Santa Monica City College, Santa Monica, California.

reaches a frenzied climax. Bula climbs to the top of rock L, as Beeka drapes herself over rock R. The music fades out under the speeches.

Beeka: 'Tis done! 'Tis done! The infant won!

Bula: A boy-child this hour will come!

Beeka: For thirteen years we've plotted well,
For this wee boy with us to dwell.

Bula: We've ready made his little crib! (Climbs down from rock, hovers around crib C, then backs down L.)

Beeka: We've knitted him a dainty bib! (During this description of items, they float across the back of the cave, under the power of "Black Art." Black lights make it possible to illuminate only the floating objects.)

Bula: Some baby-clothes we've cut and stitched,

Beeka: All with magic-spell enriched!

Bula: We've got together lots of toys!

Beeka: Just the thing for witches' boys:
A nail from a giant's toe,
Cut when crying,
"Fee . . . Fie . . . Foe!

Bula: A lizard's tail, and eagle's claw,
Alligator's teeth from snapping jaw!

Beeka: All this and more!

B. & B.: Galore! Galore! (The Witches' music swells in again, and the Witches swirl across the stage as the regular cave lighting is resumed.)

Beeka: What makes our Master Live so late?
He that's King of fear and hate!

Bula: He before whose evil power
Makes all ghosts and witches cower.

B. & B.: Our Master's Evil Power will win!
And good will bow to blackest sin.

(A thumping is heard on the trap door of the forestage, and the voice of Master Live is heard faintly.)

Live: Hail, Hags! We're here! Open the trap!

B. & B.: (Leaping and swirling to the forestage, Beeka L. and Bula R.)
They're here! They're here!
Blackest joy! Master Live has brought the boy!

(As they remove the cover to the trap door, the music swells to a crashing climax. The Ogre's theme of heavy, ominous chords is established on his first entrance and used symbolically for his presence and power throughout the play. As soon as the cover is off, a blast of smoke appears, and out of it is thrust the Ogre's black bag in which the blanketed figure of the baby is lying. Beeka grabs the bag and crouches with it L. One great hand of the Ogre appears, then the other. His face is seen, then his body, climbing laboriously out of the trap.)

Live: Fumes and vapors! What a trip I've had. (To Beeka.) That's it, hold the Boy. He grows heavy. (Stretches muscles, and moves upstage to L rock.) But mind that you guard him well!

B. & B.: (*Moving together, upstage of trap opening, Beeka holding the Bag, Bula putting cover on opening.*)

Yes, Master. We'll close the entrance up so tight
That none can trace you in your flight.

Live: (*Stretching, C of L rock.*) Skulls and crossbones, but I'm tired. Getting the sea to rise and wreck the ship with the infant on it was the hardest trick of black magic I have ever done!

Bula: (*Circling R and up R rock.*) But I sent the lightning, Master!

Beeka: (*Circling R and next to Bula.*) And I the rain . . . faster!

Live: You did it because I ordered you to! (*Moves ominously to C.*) Who got the banshees to wail that the infant Good must sleep one night at sea before he could be christened? (*Witches echo: "You, Master!"*) Who drove the banshees on and on . . . so that the ship would follow? (*Witches sigh: "You!"*) Who whipped the waves? And flayed the sea? And spilled the clouds? Unloosed the thunder? (*Witches sigh: "You!"*) Broke the ship like a toy in the angry roar? And then who sped in to snatch the boy and flee while the fury rose to swallow the ship, the crew and all?

B. & B.: You, Master! Only you! (*Bula moves to L of Ogre, Beeka R. They cringe at his knees.*)

Live: Then see that you remember how long we waited and how much Evil Power it took to bring the infant here from the Land of Good.

B. & B.: We'll rule the world from this hour

With the child of GOOD in our power! (*Beeka raises the Black Bag and the Ogre takes it and lifts it high above his head in triumph.*)

EVIL now sits on the throne,
That once belonged to GOOD alone!

Live: That's right! At last GOOD is in the power of EVIL! (*Lowers Bag to arms, Witches stand. All chuckle evilly.*) Now our only concern is to keep him so! For if GOOD ever escapes, EVIL is doomed!

B. & B.: Never! (*They swirl slightly away from him.*)

If GOOD should ever break away
Our EVIL Power is lost that day!

Live: Then guard him! (*Moves to L rock, placing the Bag on niche on it.*) Now to rest my weary bones.

(*As the Ogre exits L, Bula tiptoes after him, then gives the all-clear sign to Beeka, who pounces upon the Bag, takes the wrapped infant from it, and moves down to center of rock R. Beaming at the baby and rocking him in her arms, she sings in a loud, harsh voice.*)

Beeka: Rock-a-bye baby, weak as can be,
We'll tend you closely, Bula and me!

Bula: (*Swoops R and takes baby away from Beeka.*)

Beeka will sing and Bula will sway. (*She circles upstage with the rocking.*)

We'll chase the spirit of GOODNESS away!

Beeka: (*In front of R rock, leans up, holds Bula's arm to help with the rocking.*)

We'll sing you to sleep with a lullaby,
About a spider——

- Bula: A bug——
- Beeka: And a blue-bottle fly!
- Bula: (*Releasing baby to Beeka, as she reaches for her broom behind R rock.*)
We'll rock you to sleep with a ghostly tune,
As we fly through the sky on our witches' broom! (*Riding broom, she moves behind R rock and down front of L rock.*)
- Beeka: (*Turning front, by R rock.*) Just baby and me,
- Bula: (*Riding broom R, and standing just behind Beeka, assisting with the holding of the infant.*)
And Bula makes three.
- B. & B.: (*Simpering, as they tenderly hold the baby.*)
Itsy, bitsy, koochy, cool
Beeka and Bula bof wove ool
- (*A sudden peal of thunder makes the Witches cringe, as the Ogre enters L.*)
- Live: Enough of that drivell! You drooling drones! (*Takes baby from them, and places it in the waiting crib.*) Unless this boy is craftily taught, the GOODNESS born in him may crop out and ruin us. There is much in him to overcome, if he is to grow into our likeness. Teach him your cunning. Teach him your black magic!
- B. & B.: Aye, Master Live!
- Bula: (*Leaping and swirling far L.*)
We'll teach him the ways of the one-eyed bat,
How to tame with a curse the blackest cat.
- Beeka: How to wail with the wind through hollow logs,
To catch fat spiders and snakes and frogs.
- Live: See to it then. Teach him all you know of evil. We must keep him in our power forever!
- B. & B.: How?
- Live: You must wind a riddle! (*Moving C.*)
- B. & B.: A riddle!
- Live: That unless he solves, he can never escape us!
- Beeka: A riddle! (*The Witches weave in and out around the Ogre.*)
A riddle we'll wind, so involved,
- Bula: That it can't possibly be solved!
- Live: But remember, if he ever solves it, he goes free! (*Strong C position.*)
- Beeka: But this riddle will have such a crooked plan,
No one will guess it!
Boy nor man! (*Darts under Ogre—crouching with head between his legs.*)
- Bula: (*Climbing on Beeka's back, with head high over Ogre's shoulders, broom up.*)
This puzzle we'll spin so cunningly,
You needn't worry that he'll go free! (*They hold totem-pole position.*)
- Live: Give him but one day in his whole life to find the answer to the riddle!

B. & B.: (*Swirling on either side of Master Live, as though winding up a spell.*)
Aye, Master Live, it's coming clear!
We'll bind him tight. Hear . . . hear . . .

Beeka: When sixteen years have reached the middle,
He'll have one day to solve the riddle.

Live: (*Takes parchment from Bag and begins to write upon it as the Witches evolve the riddle. Nods encouragement to them.*) Fine . . . Go on . . .

Bula: (*Runs R to rock, and behind it, putting down broom.*)

RUN AND HIDE . . . WIND AND RAIN . . .

HUNGER STRIKE . . . SHELLS REMAIN . . . (*Comes in front of R rock and drops down.*)

Beeka: SWEET AND SOUR . . . THICK AND THIN . . .

BOUNCE AND BLOSSOM . . . (*Joins Bula, stage R.*)

LOVE BEGIN . . .

(*Puts arms around her.*)

Live: (*Delighted with riddle.*) That's it!

Bula: (*Crosses L.*) BIRD AND RABBIT . . . RING OF GOLD . . .

(*Beeka swirls L.*) BLESSINGS FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD. (*Gives blessings to Beeka, beside her.*)

Beeka: (*Inspired, dashing to R rock, and climbing it, arm upstretched.*)

GOOD FROM EVIL WINS VICTORY!

Bula: (*Also over to R rock, joining Beeka.*) THREE HUNDRED VOICES
SET HIM FREE! (*They cackle in glee, encouraged by the pleasure of the Ogre.*)

Live: (*Delighted.*) Well done! Well done! (*Putting the written riddle down into the Black Bag.*) He'll never solve it! I'll hide it deep among my deadly herbs! (*Clutching Bag to him and coming down to center of L rock.*) Solve it? He won't even find it! I keep the Black Bag with me always! (*Wicked chuckle as he pats Bag possessively.*)

Beeka: (*Encouraged to try new idea.*)

O Master, dear, just one thought more

To confuse the Boy . . . I do implore . . .

Live: No more, wondrous wenches! We've caught him fast!

Beeka: (*Overriding his weak objection.*) But, Master Live . . .

Just in case he should be bright,

We'll make his constant aid a sprite . . . Named . . .

B. & B.: MINUS, who is stupid quite,

Beeka: Who cannot think,

Bula: Nor read

Live: Nor write!

(*Curtain closes on the delighted roar of Master Live and the cackle of the Witches.*)

CURTAIN

(*As the lights dim to denote passage of time, the Witches music swells a bit and then dips as a voice is heard over the loudspeaker.*)

Voice: SIXTEEN YEARS HAVE PASSED AWAY.

AFTER A PASSAGE OF SIXTEEN YEARS

(Setting is still the cave of Master Live and the Witches, but it is lighted a bit brighter. As the curtain opens, Master Live is heard bellowing instructions and questions at Doog, as an obvious part of his daily training in black magic. The sprite, Minus, is seen curled up in front of L rock. She is yawning, obviously bored by this drill. The Ogre is down R, and Doog is in front of R rock.)

- Live: Once again, blockhead! Who is the Ruler of the Dark World?
- Doog: (By rote, having gone over it many times before.) You, Master Live, are the ruler of the Dark World, and Beeka and Bula are your assistants.
- Live: What is the difference between GOOD and EVIL?
- Doog: (Stifling a yawn.) EVIL is good and GOOD evil.
- Live: What are pins for?
- Doog: To stick in people so they jump.
- Live: Why was midnight invented?
- Doog: So that graves can open and skeletons dance.
- Minus: (Dancing a few steps.) That's the part I like. (Laughs lightly.)
- Live: (Overpowering her, and crossing to C.) What is laughter?
- Doog: (Looking at Minus.) It is the hollow sound an idiot makes.
- Minus: (Obediently to the glowering Master Live, and returning to former position.) Oh . . .
- Live: What is the greatest of all holidays?
- Minus: (Up again, eagerly.) I know! (Hums.) Jingle bells, jin . . .
- Doog: (Loudly, to cover her interruption.) Halloween! When witches roam, owls hoot, and goblins screech.
- Live: What is the best box ever invented?
- Doog: A coffin.
- Minus: (In disgust.) Ugh . . .
- Live: How do we use the black box?
- Minus: (Quickly.) To hide in! (She skittles up center and around behind L rock.)
- Live: (Furiously, and moving a few steps after Minus, as though to catch her.) To hide bones in! (To Doog.) You're sixteen now, and it's time you knew these lessons. You might do better if you spent less time with that one. (Referring to Minus.)
- Doog: (To Minus's defense.) Oh, she's a help! She likes to watch me practice my magic.
- Minus: (Eagerly coming from behind the rock.) Yes, I do! And he's getting awfully good at it! Do the one . . .
- Doog: (Pleased, and rising to the occasion.) I make up a few tricks for her. She seems to like the new ones . . .
- Live: New ones, eh?

Minus: *(Taking his surprise for encouragement.)* A lot better than those with toads and claws and . . .

Doog: She likes it better when they come out funny! *(Crossing L to Minus, and producing a ball from behind Minus' ear. She squeals with delight.)*

Live: *(R, with mounting fury.)* Funny, huh?

Doog: Or when they don't hurt! *(Balances ball on nose, bends back to steady it.)*

Live: Don't hurt, huh?

Minus: *(Carried away with pleasure at watching Doog cavort to keep ball balanced.)* Or when they're pretty, or tricky, or silly! *(Doog teeters backward in effort to balance ball.)*

Live: *(Advancing upon them C, and bellowing his fury.)* You idiots! *(Both Doog and Minus fall to floor frightened.)* Now I see what comes of those hags' advice to give Doog a fool to play with! Who is the lowest of all unearthly beings? *(He picks up Minus by the ear.)*

Minus: *(Forlornly.)* Minus!

Live: When I get around to it, I'll get those witches to fly you back to the edge of the world and dump you off! *(He releases Minus, who falls limply, and starts out R.)*

Doog: *(Realizing that he is going without his Black Bag.)* Oh, Sir! You forgot something . . .

Minus: *(Pitifully eager to be helpful.)* Your Black Bag! *(She grabs the bag and runs after Master Live, with Doog close behind her. Live turns, grabs the bag from her, making her suddenly fall backwards into Doog, who in turn falls backwards. Master Live storms out R, leaving them in a disconsolate heap on the floor.)*

Minus: Poor Doog!

Doog: Poor Minus!

Minus: Oh, he's gone to get the witches to take me away! *(Clings to him.)* I don't want to leave you!

Doog: *(Comforting her.)* Never you mind, Minus. I'll figure out some way to save you!

Minus: *(Instantly comforted, and eager.)* Will you? How?

Doog: *(Unsure.)* Oh, I'll invent some trick.

Minus: Show it to me!

Doog: *(Looking about desperately for something to amuse her.)* Now, let's see. Oh, I know! Watch, Minus! I'll save you like this! *(He brings a magic "squeeze box" from behind the R rock, which has three blocks in it: two black and one green. As he takes the blocks out he refers to them, and puts them on a niche in the R rock.)* Here you are in the middle. See? It almost matches! And this one is Beeka. *(Minus reacts with an "ugh!")* And this one is Bula. *(Another "ugh" from Minus.)* The Witches are going to carry you off between them, like this! *(He reloads the box and puts it on rock.)*

Minus: Don't you let them!

Doog: I won't! You'll see . . . *(He places his hat over the box for an instant, then lifts the loaded box and demonstrates the trick.)* No matter how tightly they

clutch you . . . and squeeze you between them as they fly off to the edge of the world . . . (*Manipulates blocks so the green one is getting smaller.*)

Minus: (*Squeaks in excitement.*) Eeeek . . .

Doog: When they finally get there, they'll find that you are gone! (*Shows the two black blocks in the box with no green one.*)

Minus: (*Amazed.*) I'm gone! Where can I be?

Doog: (*Laughing as he displays the box.*) Well, one thing is sure. You didn't go with the Witches.

Minus: Where am I?

Doog: (*Lifting up his hat on the rock, and showing the green block under it.*) Right here! Safe with me!

Minus: (*Delighted with the discovery, and crossing over to R rock to examine the block.*) Then you did save me! Oh, you good, good Doog!

Doog: (*Alarmed, and coming from behind R rock, having put the box away.*) Shhh . . . Don't ever let Master Live hear you call me that. Promise!

Minus: I promise. (*Loudly, after a short wait.*) But you are good!

Doog: (*Warningly.*) Minus! That is the one thing he doesn't want me to be! (*Then secretly.*) But do you know what?

Minus: (*Equally secret.*) No . . . what?

Doog: (*Looking around apprehensively to make sure he is not overheard.*)

I sometimes feel like that . . .

Minus: (*Creeping closer.*) Like what?

Doog: Like that word you called me . . .

Minus: (*Loudly, grasping the idea.*) Good?

Doog: (*Alarmed again.*) Don't say it out loud!

Minus: I won't. Why?

Doog: (*Patiently.*) Because Master Live doesn't like it! (*Minus starts to say, "Why?" but Doog anticipates it.*) And I don't know why, except that he acts like he's afraid of it.

Minus: (*Remembering her own plight, and running to the L rock.*) But I'm the one who's afraid! He's gone for the Witches to take me to the edge . . . (*Wails.*)

Doog: (*Desperate to amuse her.*) No, Minus! We'll be the Witches and take them to the edge of the world . . .

Minus: (*Happy again, and joining him C.*) Uh-huh! (*They gayly pantomime being the Witches and staying close together they circle L, then turn upstage and cross to R rock.*)

M. & D.: (*With delight, suggesting pushing the Witches R.*) And push them off! (*In a puff of smoke, and accompanied by his theme, the Ogre, with Beeka and Bula crouched at each side, appears R. Embarrassed, Minus and Doog back up to the L rock.*)

Doog: (*With a weak laugh.*) It was just pretend!

Minus: (*Leaning out from behind Doog.*) We meant to pull you right back!

Live: *(Exploding.) Pull us right back, huh? Beeka! Bula! Take the Minus one and dispose of her! (A bolt of thunder rolls under the Witches' movement.)*

B. & B.: *Aye, Master! (Cackling with pleasure, and moving behind R rock, in front of L rock, and circling behind it before they reach out and pull Minus up to them.)*

Beeka: To rid you of this stupid sprite
Will pleasing be for us tonight!

Bula: We've little time with her to spend!
We'll heave her off the world's end! *(Both cackle with glee.)*

Doog: *(Reaches out, grabs Minus, and pulls her over behind him, in front of L rock.)* Are you sure that's the best way to get rid of her?

Minus: *(Hiding behind him.)* Don't ask questions! Do the trick that will save me!

Live: A trick that will save you? Ho . . . ho . . . There's no trick that can save you! I'm going to use number 13-13!

B. & B.: *(Elated.)* Thirteen . . .

M. & D.: *(Dejected.)* Thirteen!

Live: Ready, Beeka?

Beeka: *(Running to R rock and climbing it, so she towers above Ogre, who is C of R rock.)* Aye, Master!

Live: Ready, Bula?

Bula: *(Over to him, and crouching at his feet.)* Aye, Master Live!

Live: Thirteen-thirteen!

B. & B.: We'll stir and mix!
Thirteen-thirteen! The greatest of all tricks!

Live: Then go for the lightning, Beeka! *(She swiftly departs R, behind the rock.)* Bula, you fetch the rain! *(She flees the other way.)* I'll stir in the most potent herbs in my bag! *(Chuckles wickedly as he reaches for his Black Bag, which has been by him since he came on; starts to take out herb, but suddenly changes his mind.)* No . . . First, a trace of snail slime, then the herb! *(He turns and walks away to the back of the Cave.)*

Minus: *(In despair.)* Oh, Doog, I'm finished! You don't have time to do any trick!

Doog: If I can get that Black Bag, my trick will be to keep him from doing his! *(Makes stealthy try for bag, almost getting it as Master Live turns around. Springs back. Tries again, and again. Master Live starts to turn around. Darts back. Minus is in a frenzy of anticipation. Third time springs forward, grabs Bag, clutches it close.)* Come on, Minus, RUN! *(And they do! The lights dim, sounds of thunder, wind and rain swell. As they disappear L, Master Live returns to place he left Bag, discovers it is gone, roars in rage and begins his search.)*

CURTAIN

FORESTAGE: *(Doog and Minus are seen huddled to the R and L of the Black Bag as the lights come up. They are breathless, but quite elated with the success of their escape. The wind fades under as the scene begins.)*

Minus: Doog, we made it! You *did* save me!

Doog: (*Seated to the R of the Bag.*) Oh, Minus, we're free! Just smell the air!

Minus: (*Scampering L and sniffing.*) Uh huh, smells just like air! (*Throws arms out to side as she breathes deeply.*)

Doog: But it's fresh air, out here, out of that cave.

Minus: (*Rubbing her stomach, suddenly remembering she's hungry.*) I'm hungry! When do we eat?

Doog: There isn't anything. Unless maybe Master Live kept some food in the Black Bag! (*On knees, starts to look in Bag.*)

Minus: I don't want anything he'd keep in there: bat wings, spider legs . . . (*She skittles behind Bag and to far R.*)

Doog: (*Rummaging through Black Bag.*) No, nothing in here.

Minus: That's fit to eat. Ugh . . .

Doog: (*Expectantly.*) Minus, how would you like . . .

Minus: Bring it on!

Doog: Or some . . .

Minus: (*Licking her lips.*) I like that!

Doog: How about a nice dish of . . .

Minus: A big helping! (*Running quickly to Doog's R, and kneeling forward.*) That's m' favorite!

Doog: Just for a start, how about a . . . (*Produces egg from Minus's hair.*) a hard-boiled goose egg? (*Hands her a hard-boiled egg.*) It's been here in your hair all the time!

Minus: It has? (*Incredulously paws through her hair.*) I didn't feel a goose lay it there! (*Cracks egg on head, proceeds to peel it.*)

Doog: Now, how many more can we eat? (*Multiplies goose eggs as he talks.*) One? Two? How about three? Maybe we'd better get a few more while we're at it. (*Places excess in Black Bag.*) You said three. How about four? I'd better put a few of these in here to have later. Imagine that . . . here's another, and another . . . and another! (*Minus squeals with delight as Doog materializes additional eggs as he puts them in Bag.*) I'll eat the last one myself. (*Apparently he does so, but he suddenly looks down at stomach and pulls the egg out intact.*) It's still here! (*Both laugh.*) I'll have to take some of this stuff out of the Bag in order to store these eggs. (*Tosses items out.*) Crows' teeth, juice of deadly nightshade, the poison herbs . . . (*Comes across the parchment MAGIC RIDDLE.*) And . . . say, what's this?

Minus: (*Takes RIDDLE, and walks R, stares at it.*) It's something all right!

Doog: (*Crossing R and looking over her shoulder at it.*) With writing on it!

Minus: (*Uncertainly.*) Oh . . . yes . . . (*As it continues to puzzle her, Doog reaches over and turns it around, right side up.*) I still can't seem to make out what it says!

Doog: (*Taking RIDDLE.*) Maybe that's because you never learned to read!
(*Walks L, reading the RIDDLE.*)

When sixteen years have reached the middle,
He'll have one day to solve the riddle. (*Looks up at the bewildered*

Minus as he continues to read.)

RUN AND HIDE WIND AND RAIN
HUNGER STRIKE SHELLS REMAIN
SWEET AND SOUR THICK AND THIN
BOUNCE AND BLOSSOM . . . LOVE BEGIN
BIRD AND RABBIT RING OF GOLD
BLESSINGS FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD
GOOD FROM EVIL WINS VICTORY
THREE HUNDRED VOICES SET HIM FREE!

Minus: (*Joining him L, looking at the RIDDLE with disgust.*) That's silly!
There's no meaning to it!

Doog: (*Turning paper over.*) There should be more to it than that! It doesn't
make sense. (*Mechanically reads the first lines again.*) "When sixteen years have
reached the middle . . .

Minus: (*Snatching RIDDLE away and quickly tearing it, dropping the pieces*
C as she crosses gayly R.) It belonged to Master Live, so it must be bad! Now it
can't hurt us!

Doog: (*Retrieving pieces and stuffing them into his hand.*) There was some-
thing there I think I understand. That about "sixteen years" . . . I'm sixteen!
Maybe it's about me!

Minus: Too late . . . (*Crosses L.*) It's all torn up! Besides, you're sixteen and
a half! (*Turns to face him.*)

Doog: That's what "the middle" means! Maybe I can put the pieces back
together again!

Minus: Could you?

Doog: (*Restores the RIDDLE.*) Yes, here it is!

Minus: You did!

Doog: Look, Minus, it's a MAGIC RIDDLE!

Minus: It certainly is! (*Moves C.*)

Doog: (*Eagerly looking at RIDDLE.*) Look, Minus! It says right here: "He'll
have one day to solve the riddle!

Minus: (*Looking hard at RIDDLE.*) But what does it mean?

Doog: It means that I have just today to solve the riddle! And if I do,
look . . . (*In tremendous excitement finds last line of puzzle.*) Right here at the
bottom . . . it says I'll go free!

Minus: When?

Doog: When I solve the riddle! Now, let's see, how do I begin? . . . (*Refer-*
ing to the cluttered stage, and crossing L.) Gather up the things, Minus, because
we haven't got much time. (*As Minus works at repacking the Black Bag and*
picking up the eggshells, Doog reads.) "Run and Hide . . . Wind and Rain!"

We did that! That part is already solved! Now, the next thing: "Hunger strike . . . Shells remain . . ."

Minus: (*Kneeling and turning to him with shells in both hands.*) What could that mean?

Doog: We were hungry, Minus! That does that part. (*Back to RIDDLE.*)

Now: "Shells remain . . ."

Minus: (*Looking around.*) Sea shells? No. Snail shells? No . . .

Doog: The eggshells! That's it!

Minus: (*Stands up and drops shells.*) Yes! No . . . That's only part of it! (*L to Doog, pointing to more writing on RIDDLE.*)

Doog: (*Unhappy.*) Yes, only the first part!

(*A swell of music and voices from the inner stage catch their interest, and they turn fascinated. Minus hastily stuffs the RIDDLE in the Bag and pulls it L with them, as the curtain opens on the dancing and laughing villagers. They stand entranced until the dance is almost over and Gweneth pulls Doog into the laughing group.*)

SCENE TWO

(A colorful market place street, with one stall LC which is practical. This belongs to Gweneth and her mother and features flowers, vases, and flowerpots. There is a small table in front of the stall on which are three inverted flowerpots and a basket. The rest of the setting should be a splash of bright color, in sharp contrast with the ominous cave in the previous scene. As the curtain opens, a gay, whirling dance is in progress, with four maidens and one young man of the village. The music of the dance is heard on the forestage of the preceding scene, and as Doog and Minus move to the far L, the dancers are revealed on the stage.)

Minus: *(Thoroughly captivated by dancers, having watched them awhile.)*
Oh, Doog, have you ever seen anything so beautiful?

Doog: *(Equally enraptured with the movement and gayety of the dancers.)*
They look so happy! And they're having such fun!

Minus: Master Live wouldn't like this at all!

Doog: I think this is what I've wanted all my life! Imagine to laugh like this with no one to stop you!

Minus: I hope these people know how lucky they are, to live here instead of that old cave.

Doog: And not to be afraid of being good! Oh, this must be the most wonderful place to live in the whole world. No one to scold—

Gweneth: *(She breaks out of the dancing group and comes over L to Doog, extending her hand, and drawing him into the dance.)* Come dance with me. I need a partner!

Doog: But I've never learned to dance— *(Gweneth ignores his protest, and pulls him into the dancing group. The dance continues in the R half of the stage.)*

Minus: *(Calling out an explanation.)* He never had time to learn anything but black magic! But he knows a lot about that! You should watch him— *(Realizing that she is not heard.)* Oh, well, there's no need for black magic here! *(She sits LC, with the Black Bag just to her L. She is absorbed in the dance.)*

(Suddenly, over the music, there is a peal of thunder, and the dancers become very concerned. The stage seems to grow darker, as they mill about a little, looking up, trying to discover the cause of the thunder.)

Janice: Oh, surely that can't be rain!

Dirk: The sun's shining, and it's the middle of summer!

Ann: But it was thunder! A shower maybe?

Zoreen: Rain would spoil the birthday party of the Princess.

Gweneth: And our dresses! Brand new ones for the party!

Dirk: *(Scoffing.)* It won't rain! It can't rain! Isn't it the birthday party? Well, then, the King won't let it! *(They gather in a circle, stage RC, laughing and ad libbing about the previous parties and the King giving the Princess anything she desires.)*

(Out of the roll of thunder comes the Ogre's theme, and in a smokepuff he appears L. He keeps to the L of the flower stall, out of sight of all but the audience.)

Live: Since the Boy and the fool sneaked off, they've found out about the MAGIC RIDDLE. If it isn't solved today, Doog can never get away! *(He starts to creep up very stealthily on the Black Bag by Minus but unattended by her since she is leaning R listening to the dancers.)* If I can only get back that Bag, with the rest of the RIDDLE in it, then Doog will be my slave for life! *(Close to the Bag, he reaches down for it just as Minus leans back and rests her elbow on it. Thwarted, Live moves L and partially conceals himself by standing in front of the curtain, but still in view of the audience.)*

Dirk: *(Voice coming out of previous conversation villagers have been having.)*
—and that party turned into a circus and we all had rides on the elephants!

Janice: But the time she asked for gypsies was the most fun of a!!!

Doog: Gypsies?

Ann: Yes! The King and Queen grant the Princess any wish she desires on her birthday, and that year she wanted gypsies!

Zoreen: And they came and told all our fortunes!

Gweneth: They saw into future days, months, years!

Minus: *(Very interested, standing up.)* Can they see ahead a whole day? *(Villagers indicate they can.)* If they can, Doog, we've got to find them! *(She takes a step toward them, and as she does so, Master Live stealthily moves toward the Bag the same distance.)*

Doog: Where do they live? What are they like?

Dirk: They were pretty exciting, all right—

Minus: *(A step closer to them, with Master Live creeping up a step on the the Bag.)* If the gypsies can see into the future, there's a piece of paper here—*(Still talking to the group, and not looking back at the Bag, she suddenly backs up to the Bag, reaches down for it, and scoops it up and away just as Master Live makes a lunge for it. Minus joins the group RC.)*

Live: *(Caught off balance by the sudden disappearance of the Bag, and furiously straightening himself up.)* That imp! *(Disappears L.)*

Doog: Now if you can tell us how to reach those gypsies, we'll—

Severe: *(Entering R and immediately destroying the excitement and enjoyment of the group.)* Well, girl, how was business while I was away? How much money did you take in? *(Crosses up LC to her flower stall. As she crosses, the villagers move a bit but stay RC, and Doog and Minus, pulling the Bag with them, cross down R to the curtain line.)* There should be a brisk sale today of all—*(Catches sight of dead flowers in stall and hurries over.)* Gweneth—

Gweneth: *(Fearfully, and moving up to R of the flower stall.)* Yes, Mother? Is there anything wrong?

Severe: Wrong? *(To villagers.)* Wrong? she asks me! Perhaps you could tell her, since it's as much your doings as hers!

Dirk: *(Hesitatingly speaking for group.)* How do you mean?

Severe: All of this silly jumping around and laughing. If it weren't for—*(Continues to describe the dancing under the following speeches.)*

Doog: Does this sound a little familiar to you?

Minus: Uh huh, maybe she came out of a cave too!

Doog: I didn't think there was anyone like that here! I thought everyone was good! And only back in the cave people—

Minus: But, Doog! You were in that bad cave, and you were good!

Severe: (*Voice coming back strong.*) —and while you're hopping around like grasshoppers, what happens to the flowers? Dead! All of them!

Gweneth: (*Tearfully.*) I'm sorry! I had no idea they would die!

Severe: They usually do when they're neglected. Of course, there's no pleasure in watering the flowers and tending them, and selling them! No, indeed! The pleasure in this life is to run away from work and sing and dance and never give a thought to your poor old burdened mother, who—

Gweneth: Forgive me, Mother! I do care about the flowers and about you—

Ann: You are right, Dame Severe! It was our fault!

Zoreen: That's true! We came by for Gweneth to practice our dance for the party.

Dirk: And since there were no customers, we—

Severe: Enough of this prattling! I know who was to blame! That doesn't get my flowers back, does it? (*Looks at empty flower pot again.*)

Doog: (*Crossing up to Dame Severe, C of the flower stall.*) Pardon, Dame Severe, but are you sure they're dead?

Severe: Ninny, of course they are! Do you think I can't tell a live flower from a dead one? (*Picks up a flower-pot which has just a stem growing in it.*)

Doog: (*Takes the flower-pot, does a flourish over the dead stem.*) This flower looks—far from dead! (*The stem opens into a colorful flower! He hands it to Dame Severe, and reaches for another flower-pot.*) And this one! (*He repeats the trick, to the astonishment of the villagers and Dame Severe, again handing the flower-pot to her. Then, glancing at the stall itself, and crossing down L, he turns and makes a flourish at the stall.*) Or how about this! (*The latticework on the top of the stall suddenly blooms with flowers.*)

Villagers: Look! They're real! What lovely flowers! They're beautiful!

Severe: (*Sputtering.*) Of course . . . Yes, indeed. They don't seem to be dead at all, do they? (*Weak and embarrassed laugh.*) Well . . . my eyesight has not been too good of late. Imagine that . . . as fine a crop of flowers as I ever raised. I can sell these soon enough! (*To Gweneth and villagers.*) There, go along, all of you.

Gweneth: (*Hugging her mother.*) Thank you, Mother! (*Crossing L to Doog.*) And thank you—

Doog: Doog!

Gweneth: (*Very warmly.*) Thank you Doog.

Doog: (*Shyly.*) Oh, it was nothing.

Villagers: But it was astonishing! Remarkable! Tell us! How did you do it? Tell us! (*Ad lib reactions.*)

Minus: (*Proudly.*) He practiced the trick an hour every day!

Doog: (*Wryly, crossing C to the villagers.*) And I was never allowed to skip a lesson! (*With a little laugh he and Gweneth move upstage to the R of the flower stall. Dame Severe goes behind the counter of her stall.*)

Janice: We haven't much time before the party. We'd better do our dance again!

Dirk: No more! Not now. Let's play ball!

Ann: Who has one?

Zoreen: *(Far R, taking one from pocket.)* Will this do? Catch! *(Throws ball across stage, where it is lost in the wings L.)*

Dirk: *(Having jumped for the ball too late.)* I didn't see it coming. Where did it go?

Ann: Over here someplace. But I can't find it! *(Looks about stage L, near Dame Severe's stall. She watches Doog's next trick as she stands at the curtain line, far L.)*

Gweneth: Well, we can't play that game, now that the ball's gone!

Doog: *(Takes identical ball out of pocket.)* Is this it?

Zoreen: *(Moving over to Doog.)* No, that isn't it! It's lost, over there someplace.

Doog: Then let's send this one to look for it. *(Produces another identical ball.)* With a twin . . . *(Crosses over to the little table in front of stall, lifts one of the inverted flower-pots and reveals a ball under it.)* And a triplet! Now, let's see . . . where will they look? Here? Or here? *(He proceeds to do the cup-and-balls trick, lifting up each flower-pot twice, and each time finding a ball, although each time he takes the ball out from under the flower-pot and puts it in the basket.)* Or will they look here? Or here? Or here? *(Villagers exclaim as the balls keep reappearing.)* Now, hunt for balls, and find—lemons! *(As he lifts flower-pots for the third time, there is a lemon under each one, which he puts on the top of the inverted flower-pots.)*

Villagers: *(Laugh.)* Wonderful! I like that. Wasn't that marvelous?

Doog: Any one for a game of ball? *(Comes around the table with basket, from which he takes balls and tosses them to Dirk, C, who distributes them to the girls.)*

Minus: *(Suddenly getting an idea, and running quickly across stage and behind the table.)* I would like to give someone these! *(She picks up the lemons, holds them out in front of her, puzzled.)* Now, let's see, how does that go? "Sweets to the sweet, and—*(Turns to Dame Severe and extends the gifts.)*

Severe: *(Indignantly.)* For me?

Minus: *(Realizing that she is extending lemons.)* Oh . . . *(She puts them on the counter, and in embarrassment quickly runs back R to the Black Bag.)*

Dirk: Let's play toss ball down on the square. Come on! Last one there's a goat herder . . . *(Runs off R, as Ann, Zoreen, and Janice follow laughing.)*

(As the villagers exit, Doog comes down R to join the still embarrassed Minus and reassures her quietly.)

Gweneth: May I go Mother? It's on the way to the Palace, and it's almost time for the party!

Severe: Yes, yes, go on. *(Admiring the restored flowers in the flowerpots.)* I'm trying to remember how I planted these. Most unusual crop I've ever had. Now let's see . . . I put in—*(Continues mumbling and concentrating on the flowers under the next scene.)*

Gweneth: *(To Doog.)* Come on to the party, Doog. And—

Minus: Minus!

Gweneth: You too, Minus! All of the village is invited.

Doog: (*Hesitating.*) I would, Gweneth, but I haven't got much time. (*Musing.*) Just the rest of the day, to be exact! (*Kneels by the Bag, reaching into it.*)

Gweneth: What do you mean?

Minus: He means he has only the rest of today to solve the riddle!

Gweneth. What riddle?

Minus: (*Ignoring question, and crossing Doog to stand next to Gweneth.*) That's what it says. And a lot of other stuff that's perfectly silly, like——

Doog: (*Having taken the MAGIC RIDDLE out of the Black Bag and reading it.*) "SWEET AND SOUR . . . THICK AND THIN . . . BOUNCE . . ."

Gweneth: "Bounce!" That reminds me! They're waiting for me in the square to play ball. (*Starts off after the villagers.*) Come along to the party. (*Exits upstage R.*)

Doog: (*With excitement, standing.*) Minus! Gweneth solved part of it!

Minus: She did?

Doog: The balls! Balls bounce!

Minus: (*Puzzled.*) They do? (*Finally getting it.*) They do!

Doog: Now what's left? (*Reading MAGIC RIDDLE.*) "BOUNCE AND BLOSSOM . . ." (*Crosses to RC, musing.*) "BLOSSOM . . ."

Minus: (*Equally puzzled.*) Now what could that mean?

Severe: (*Still enrapt with the flowers and her problem of what she did to get such showy plants.*)——the most beautiful blossoms I have ever grown! Did I give them a pinch of mold or—— (*Voice dies under the following speeches, but she is still engrossed in the flowers.*)

Doog: (*C, turning upstage, and extending arm to flower stall.*) "BLOSSOMS . . ." That's it, Minus! That's what "BOUNCE AND BLOSSOM" means!

Minus: The balls and the flowers! How about that!

Doog: (*Eagerly returning to the MAGIC RIDDLE.*) What's left? Here it is: "SWEET AND SOUR . . . THICK AND THIN . . ."

Minus: (*Standing close to Doog, RC, and peering down at MAGIC RIDDLE.*) What could that mean? "SWEET AND SOUR . . . THICK AND THIN . . ."

Live: (*As they stand enrapt with the Riddle, a sudden peal of thunder sounds. The lights dim slightly, and Master Live reappears up L in a smoke-puff, his presence noted only by the audience.*) Another piece of that blasted puzzle solved! If the Boy gets the rest of it, GOOD is free! And EVIL is ruined! If I can only get the MAGIC RIDDLE and destroy it, he can't solve it! Then tomorrow he'll be back in the cave again! And I will be safe!

Minus: "SOUR . . ." (*With great excitement.*) The lemons, Doog! They were sour! And so was Dame Severe!

Live: That idiot-child!

Doog: You're a wonder, Minus!

Live: Yes . . . Isn't she?

Doog: Dame Severe was sour, but Gweneth was sweet! (*Moves R, crossing Minus, and gazing after the departed Gweneth.*) "SWEET AND SOUR . . ." We've got it, Minus! (*Back to MAGIC RIDDLE.*) And "THICK AND THIN . . ."

Live: That's enough!

Minus: I know . . . "THICK——"

Live: Silence!

Minus: (*Shakes her head, the thought gone.*) Uh . . . uh . . . I almost had it!

Live: That's better.

Doog: "THICK AND THIN . . ." (*Looks at Dame Severe.*) She's fat, and Gweneth's thin! That's it! (*Starts down R to put the MAGIC into Bag.*) We've got all but "LOVE BEGIN . . ." (*Picks up Bag, almost putting RIDDLE into it.*)

Minus: Oh, no, we don't have all but "LOVE BEGIN . . ." There's more to it!

Doog: (*Looks at rest of RIDDLE, discouraged.*) Of course! (*Dragging Bag with him, he crosses to RC, reading RIDDLE.*)

" . . . LOVE BEGIN . . .

BIRD AND RABBIT . . . RING OF GOLD . . .

BLESSING FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD . . .

GOOD FROM EVIL WINS VICTORY . . .

THREE HUNDRED VOICES SET HIM FREE . . .

Minus: That last part seems to make no sense! And we've hardly got any time left to solve it.

Gweneth: (*Entering UR, and calling to them.*) We're ready to go! Coming, Doog?

Doog: (*Having tucked the RIDDLE into the Bag, now lets go of Bag as he eagerly crosses UR to join Gweneth.*) Yes! (*They exit R, when Doog suddenly returns to Minus and excitedly whispers to her.*) I've got it, Minus! (*Looks longingly in the direction of Gweneth.*) "LOVE BEGIN . . ." (*Exits R, smitten.*)

Minus: (*Sighs, and follows Doog a few steps UR.*) I'll say you've got it! Bad!

Live: (*Having watched his chance carefully, and now seeing the Bag unattended.*) Now for the Bag!

Gweneth: (*Calling off R.*) Coming, Minus?

Minus: (*With a sigh, still caught up in the romance.*) Yes! Just as soon as I get this! (*Gazing out R, she idly steps over to Bag, unaware of Master Live's stealthy approach. Reaching down for the Bag, she quickly skips out R with it, leaving Master Live, who has lunged for the Bag and missed, sprawled full-length on the floor.*)

(*A peal of thunder accompanies Master Live's anger and frustration as he awkwardly gets up, shaking his fist at the departed Minus!*)

Live: That addle-pated upstart! One-half of the MAGIC RIDDLE solved! I've got to get that Bag, with the RIDDLE in it, but I need help! (*Looks over at Dame Severe, who is behind counter of her flower-stall, now busily sweeping and humming tunelessly.*) Just the one! (*He moves RC, trying to get her attention.*) Psst . . . Over here!

Severe: (*Coming out of stall with her broom.*) Flowers? Want to buy some beautiful flowers, Mister?

Live: Beautiful . . . bah! No, I just want to talk to you.

Severe: (*With disgust.*) What could I possibly have to talk about with such a creature. Look at your clothes!

Live: Yes?

Severe: You look like an ogre!

Live: (*Knowingly.*) Yes! I think you'll be interested in what I have to say. Just a word about your daughter. In private— (*Indicates the curtain closing as a means of keeping their conversation secret.*)

Severe: (*Bringing her broom, and coming to the forestage.*) My daughter, what has she been up to?

Live: In private! (*As soon as Dame Severe is past the curtain line C, he pulls lightly on the R side of the curtain and it closes, leaving them alone on the forestage.*) Your daughter dances and plays all the time, doesn't she?

Severe: That she does! Just plays . . . sings . . . wastes her time.

Live: (*Comfortingly, as he puts arm about her shoulder.*) There, there, I understand.

Severe: Such ingratitude! (*Sniveling.*) After all I've done for her!

Live: (*Saccharine.*) Shocking, my dear. (*Crossing Severe, moving slightly L.*)

Severe: Thinks of no one but herself.

Live: And that Boy! A brash, impudent one for you!

Severe: He certainly is! He told me my flowers were dead. Those beautiful blossoms I grew from seed!

Live: (*Meaningly, and close to her.*) I have a plan for him. If you could get your daughter's help, you and I could be partners!

Severe: Partners? I don't understand!

Live: We could make a great team. (*Crosses R, savoring the similarity.*) You remind me of other friends of mine: Beeka and Bula. You're a real witch at heart! (*Turns directly to her.*)

Severe: (*Furious.*) A witch am I? I'm a gentlewoman!

Live: (*Bends over so his face is nose to nose with Dame Severe's.*) It's like looking into a mirror! I hold up the glass and see myself in your face!

Severe: A mirror! (*Drawing back.*) Why, you ugly fiend! I'll mirror you! (*She picks up the broom and lays it on him.*)

Live: (*Protesting, covering his head, retreating from her in a circle around the stage.*) But Dame . . . Dame Severe!

Severe: (*Punctuating speech with well placed blows, as she follows him twice around stage.*) I'll have you know that I'm kind, . . . considerate . . . thoughtful . . .

Live: (*Alternating agreement with crys of anguish.*) Ouch! Of course! Ouch! Indeed! Ouch! Just as I said! Ouch!

Severe: Delicate . . . mild tempered . . . sweet-dispositioned . . . (*Both retreat stage L.*)

SCENE THREE

The gardens of the Royal Palace. Upstage C is an elevated dais on which are placed in a row rather ornate seats for the King, R, the Queen, L, and the Princess, C. Castle turrets are seen in the background and RC. LC is a garden bench around which the villagers are grouped. As the curtain opens to the fanfare of regal music, the Royal Family is seen standing in front of their garden thrones, receiving the low curtsies of the village maidens. Separately, each comes to C, bows, presents the Princess with a handmade birthday gift. Ann gives a wreath of flowers; Zoreen, an earthen bowl; Janice, a nosegay; and Dirk, a carved box. The Princess graciously thanks each and he returns LC to a grouping around the bench. The music fades out as King Hurth moves off the dais, R. The Princess sits, C, with the Queen standing to her L.

King: But surely, Pamela, now that the villagers are here, you will want your party to begin!

Queen: Of course, my dear! You will have lots of fun!

Princess: (*Dejected.*) But I can't have any fun when I didn't get the one thing that I wanted!

Villagers: What was that, Princess? What did you want?

Princess: (*With a deep sigh.*) A magician!

Villagers: A magician? That would be nice! What fun that would have been.

King: We tried to find one, Pamela!

Queen: (*Crossing R to the King.*) Your Father sent the soldiers everywhere to hunt for one!

King: But none could be found! (*Hopefully, moving in front of Queen and up to R of the dais.*) But they did see a beautiful Shetland pony!

Queen: (*Persuasively.*) With a long, golden mane!

Princess: (*Sighing.*) All I want is a magician!

Queen: (*Eagerly.*) How about a little castle for your very own?

Princess: (*Distastefully.*) Ugh . . .

King: Or a miniature—

Princess: (*Quite sure.*) No . . . Only a magician!

Dirk: (*In to LC.*) King Hurth, is there anything we can do? We've a dance she might enjoy.

Janice: We planned it just for you, Princess Pamela! Would you like to see it?

Queen: (*Moving R, and answering for Princess.*) Of course she would!

King: (*Assisting Princess off dais and crossing R with her to stand next to the Queen, with the Princess in front of them.*) Yes, indeed! Do it by all means! (*The villagers perform a spirited dance for the Princess, using the C and L side of the stage for movement. They break into a few solos, with Dirk doing some spectacular leaps. As the music and dance finish, the Royal Family applauds. The villagers return to a grouping around the bench LC.*)

Queen: Splendid!

King: Bravo! Wasn't that spectacular, Pamela?

Princess: (*Stepping slightly L and bowing to the villagers.*) Yes, very nice! (*Turning back to King and Queen.*) If only they could do magic too!

Queen: But, Pamela, you can't expect villagers to be able to do magic tricks!

King: Of course not, dear, these folks haven't even seen magic——

Dirk: (*Eagerly, remembering Doog's recent performance.*) Maybe we have, Your Majesty!

Villagers: (*Gathering together, in eager discussion.*) You mean like those we saw? Like the ball? The flowers? Those things we saw——

Zoreen: (*Stepping out of the group, and coming C.*) We think we remember one, Princess!

Princess: (*Eagerly, joining her C.*) Oh, show it to me! Please! (*As Zoreen rejoins her group, the Princess returns to her seat on the dais, calling excitedly to the Queen.*) They know one! They know magic!

Queen: (*Crossing to her own throne.*) Wouldn't that be splendid, Pamela, if they did? (*She sits, Dirk assisting in the adjustment of her train.*)

(*The King sits, as the villagers huddle once more for their consultation on how to do the trick. Ready, Dirk comes forward to LC, as the girls cluster L.*)

Dirk: (*With a flourish, dropping to one knee.*) I think it goes like this! (*With his R hand high, he reaches behind him with his L hand, gesturing to the girls to bring him a ball. Ann runs up, puts a ball in his hand, then circles around the bench to rejoin the girls.*) First, there is one ball! See? (*Holds it high in R hand, again gesturing with L for another ball. Zoreen repeats business of giving Dirk a ball.*) And then it becomes two balls! See? (*Adds ball to R hand, gestures again, gets ball from Janice.*) And suddenly I have three! (*Holding three balls in R hand, stands, finishes with a flourish.*) That's it!

Princess: (*Bewildered.*) That's a trick?

Dirk: (*Struggling, and again huddling with the girls.*) Well, maybe it didn't go quite like that.

Ann: Let's do it again from the beginning. (*Others make suggestions about how the trick began.*)

Dirk: First, one ball got lost, like this! (*He bounces ball off R.*) (*A ball immediately bounces back on the stage from off R.*)

Doog: (*Calling off R.*) And it comes back like this . . . And this! (*Another ball bounces on.*) And this! (*Another ball bounces on.*)

Princess: Magic! It's magic!

Villagers: It's Doog! The boy we met in the village! The magician! The balls again! (*Dirk caught each ball as it bounced on stage.*)

(*Doog appears R, followed by Minus, who is pulling the Bag, and Gweneth. As Doog and Minus stand RC, Gweneth sweeps to C, makes a deep curtsy to the Royal Family, who are now standing.*)

King: Welcome, strangers! Gweneth . . .

Gweneth: (*Crossing up to just R of the dais.*) This is Doog, King Hurth. And Minus. Queen Christine, may I present my friends?

Queen: Delighted!

Princess: I'm so glad you came! Can you do tricks?

Minus: (*Proudly.*) Can he? You should see him do black mag——

Doog: (*Covering Minus's remark.*) Tricks? What kind?

Princess: Oh, any kind, but especially those about rabbits— (*Settling expectantly in her throne.*) Show me one about rabbits!

Queen: I'm afraid the Princess has been reading too many books. She's read somewhere about rabbits being taken out of hats— (*Sits, prepares to comfort the Princess.*)

King: (*Also sitting, with a sigh.*) Yes, we know there are no such things as rabbits coming out of hats!

Doog: Oh, I think that is possible! Especially when it is for a birthday party! (*Crosses to C, bows to Princess, then moves to L of dais. He flourishes his hat for all to see, then reaches into it and pulls out a rabbit!*)

Princess: A rabbit!
(*General exclamations from all.*)

Queen: How captivating!

King: Extraordinary!

Doog: I think I have another gift for the Princess! (*Moves R, where Gweneth has been standing with Minus, takes a scarf from Gweneth, turns it a few times, then presses it through his hands, and from under it takes a bird in a cage.*) And here it is! (*He hands scarf to Gweneth, holding bird cage for all to see.*)
(*General consternation and admiration from everyone.*)

Princess: (*Radiant, handing rabbit to King, and crossing to RC to receive the bird cage from Doog.*) Thank you, Doog! Oh, thank you! You are the most wonderful magician in the whole world! (*Turns for confirmation to villagers.*) Isn't he?

Villagers: Yes! Indeed he is!

Princess: (*Back to Doog, who has dropped to one knee in a bow of appreciation.*) Blessings on you! (*She leans over and kisses him impulsively.*)

Doog: Thank you, Princess!
(*Princess crosses to the bench LC, showing the villagers her bird cage. The King and Queen also join the admiring group, standing with the villagers in a picture of rapt but quiet attention under the following scene.*)

Minus: (*Excitedly calling to Doog.*) Doog! Doog! (*Gets his attention and pulls him down R to curtain line.*) That was it!

Doog: (*Confused, but going with her.*) What do you mean?

Gweneth: (*Also joining them down R.*) What is it, Minus?

Minus: The RIDDLE! That was another piece of it. Look and see! (*She gestures excitedly to the Bag.*)

Doog: (*Kneeling, and taking MAGIC RIDDLE from Black Bag which Minus has pulled down R.*) I think you're right! Let's see, where were we?

Minus: (*To Gweneth.*) Doog has to solve the MAGIC RIDDLE before the end of the day! Then he'll be free of Master Live forever!

Gweneth: Master Live? Who's he?

Minus: (*Crossing Doog, to stand to the R of Gweneth.*) He's an evil ogre, who kept Doog trapped in a cave.

Doog: It's all done up to . . . (*Reads from MAGIC RIDDLE.*)
BIRD AND RABBIT . . . RING OF GOLD . . .
BLESSING FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD . . .

- Minus: (To Gweneth.) See? Some of that happened!
- Gweneth: Of course! (Crosses Minus to take RIDDLE from Doog.) "BIRD AND RABBIT . . ." That was the magic you did! The bird——
- Doog: (Standing.) In the cage! That's right!
- Gweneth: And the rabbit——
- Minus: That you gave the Princess!
- Gweneth: (Returning to the MAGIC RIDDLE.) Now, let's see what's next!
RING OF GOLD . . .
BLESSING FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD . . .!
- Doog: (Puzzled.) Ring of gold——
- Minus: (Totally minus.) Ring of gold?
- Gweneth: A ring of gold is a crown! (Crossing around Minus to stage C, looking at the standing group.) And there are three of them here, see!
- Doog: That's right! The King's, the Queen's——
- Gweneth: And the Princess's!
- Minus: How about that!
- Gweneth: (Returning R to Doog, reading RIDDLE.) Now what? BLESSING FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD . . . (With a sudden realization.) The Princess!
- Doog: (Loudly, crossing to C.) Princess Pamela!
- Princess: (Coming out from group admiring her bird and rabbit, and joining Doog C.) What?
- Doog: How old are you today?
- Princess: Ten years old! (Looking around to villagers to focus attention.) Why?
- Gweneth: That's it! "BLESSING FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD!"
- Minus: Doog, another part of the MAGIC RIDDLE is solved! You're almost free! (Moves up to Doog, tugging his arm.) (Considerable reaction from the group as to What? "What does he mean?" "Magic Riddle?" Princess goes questioningly to Queen, just L of dais, as King crosses to C.)
- King: I don't understand! What is that about a MAGIC RIDDLE?
- Doog: Your Majesty, Minus and I escaped from the Cave of Evil with Master Live's Black Bag, and——
- Minus: Beeka and Bula were going to push me off the edge of the world—— (Standing just R of Doog, and looking around him.)
- Doog: And after we ran away, we looked in the Bag and found——
- Minus: Goose eggs!
- King: Goose eggs?
- Doog: (Joining in general laughter.) No, Your Majesty! We found the MAGIC RIDDLE, which gave me one day to find my way out of the spell——
- Minus: And the day is almost over, and the RIDDLE isn't solved, and——
- Severe: (Calling off R.) Where's Doog? Where's my daughter? My little lamb? (As Dame Severe comes in R, and pauses to embrace Gweneth, the villagers react to Dame Severe's entrance.)
- Janice: That's Dame Severe! What's she doing here?

Gweneth: Mother!

Severe: (*Crossing to C to make curtsey to Royalty, and then moving up to R of dais to address King.*) Begging your pardon, Your Majesties, and Your Royal Highness, but I had to find my daughter and see that she was safe. And is the Boy, Doog, here?

Doog: Yes, Dame Severe, I am.

Severe: (*Turning R to him, and patting his shoulder.*) Thank heaven! Then I'm not too late.

Gweneth: Too late for what?

Severe: To warn him of that awful man! He wanted me to help him catch you—and he kept muttering about a Black Bag.

Minus: (*Running down R to Bag, and clutching it to her.*) I've got it!

Severe: (*Following Minus down R.*) But he means to get you! Said something about sending some witches after you!

Minus: (*Fearfully sinking to floor, and leaning against Bag.*) Beeka and Bula!

King: (*Standing in front of throne, having returned there during the entrance of Dame Severe.*) Perhaps I can help!

Doog: I'm afraid not, Your Majesty! There's only one way out for me, and that is to solve the MAGIC RIDDLE.

Princess: (*Eagerly.*) Riddle? I love riddles! (*Crosses to throne and sits.*)

Queen: Maybe we can help you solve it! (*Sitting in throne.*)

King: Yes! Let us try! Where is it?

Doog: (*Takes RIDDLE from Gweneth, who extends it to him, and gives it to King.*) Right here!

Minus: (*Calling out.*) And it's a lallapalluza!

(*Doog and Gweneth stand together RC, with Dame Severe standing, and Minus sitting, down R.*)

King: (*Reading RIDDLE.*) When sixteen years have reached the middle, he'll have one day to solve the riddle.

Doog: That's today!

Minus: And the day is almost over!

King: (*Returning to RIDDLE.*)

RUN AND HIDE . . . WIND AND RAIN . . .
HUNGER STRIKE . . . SHELLS REMAIN . . .

Minus: We ate an egg and solved that one.

King: SWEET AND SOUR . . . THICK AND THIN . . .
BOUNCE AND BLOSSOM . . . LOVE BEGIN . . .

Doog: We met someone sweet . . . (*Shyly looking at Gweneth.*)

Minus: And someone sour . . . (*Looks up at Dame Severe, halts, embarrassed.*) Ugh . . . We got that one!

King: (*Back to RIDDLE.*)

BIRD AND RABBIT . . . RING OF GOLD . . .
BLESSING FROM A TEN-YEAR-OLD . . .

Gweneth: And that happened here. Doog gave Princess Pamela a——

Queen: A bird and a——

Princess: A rabbit!

Ann: And we all heard the Princess give him her blessing!

Villagers: That's right! She did! Just a moment ago!

Princess: (*Excited.*) Yes I did!

King: Then only two lines of the MAGIC RIDDLE remain!

Villagers: Only two lines! It's almost solved!

King: GOOD FROM EVIL WINS VICTORY

THREE HUNDRED VOICES SET HIM FREE!

(*General reaction of: "What could that mean?" "Three hundred voices——", "——wins victory." "How confusing."*)

Severe: (*Voice coming out of general musing about RIDDLE.*) "GOOD FROM EVIL" . . . The greatest evil I ever met was that old man—— what did you say his name was?

Doog: Master Live!

King: That's an odd name. Never heard it before. How do you spell it?

Doog: L - I - V - E - .

King: (*Musing.*) L - I - V - E - .

Villagers: (*Softly, thinking out spelling with King.*) L - I - V - E - . . .

Gweneth: (*Suddenly.*) E - V - I - L - . Why, that's "EVIL." (*Crosses Doog to speak directly to King.*) Master Live's name is "EVIL" spelled backwards! (*Turns to include entire group.*)

Villagers: (*Amazed.*) So it is. Imagine. Of course!

Gweneth: And your name, Doog! (*Spelling name.*) It's spelled D - O - O - G, but turned around it would be G - O - O - D, or "GOOD!" So your real name is "GOOD" and Master Live's real name is "EVIL!"

(*Suddenly, topping the general excitement of this discovery, the full, majestic theme of the Ogre is heard. The lights dim out as the turret RC lights up to reveal Master Live in a strong, threatening position, with Beeka and Bula crouched on either side. As the characters on stage turn to look at the lighted, smoke-puff appearance of the trio, they move in fear away from the turret. Minus runs and hides behind Doog, who fearfully backs away to RC. The villagers stay close together, two seated on the bench and two standing behind it. Gweneth and Dame Severe stand together down R, looking upstage at the apparitions.*)

Live: (*Waiting out his full dramatic theme, then bellowing.*) That's enough! The MAGIC RIDDLE wasn't supposed to be solved!

B. & B.: Stop! The RIDDLE is wound up so tight,

It can't be unraveled before tonight!

(*The lights on stage dim slowly up to reveal characters. Turret remains lighted.*)

King: (*Indicating Doog, then Master Live.*) GOOD . . . AND EVIL . . . That part is solved! (*Group reaction of "Yes!", "It is!"*) Now only one line remains. "THREE HUNDRED VOICES SET HIM FREE!" What could that mean?

All: (*Perplexed.*) Three hundred . . .

Minus: (*Hiding behind Doog, just to his L.*) Solve it Doog, before it's too late! The day is almost finished!

Gweneth: Yes, it's getting darker!

Queen: So it is!

Princess: Solve the RIDDLE, Doog, and stay here with us forever!

Doog: But I can't solve it alone! It says: "THREE HUNDRED VOICES SET ME FREE!" There aren't that many here!

Villagers: (*Dejected.*) No . . .

Minus: I'll see! (*Crosses to villagers, counting each.*) One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . (*Up to thrones, counting.*) five . . . six . . . seven . . .

Villagers: (*Echo Minus's counting.*) Six . . . seven . . .

Minus: (*Just to R of King, hand over head to count self.*) Eight . . .

Gweneth: It's no use! There aren't three hundred!

Minus: (*Back to Doog, standing just to his R.*) I've never seen that many people!

Doog: (*Having for a moment been looking straight front, and suddenly exclaiming.*) Minus, do you see what I see?

Minus: (*Front, but unseeing.*) No! What?

Doog: (*With a wide gesture inviting Royal Family, Gweneth, and Severe to look front.*) Out there! (*Referring villagers to audience.*) See?

All: (*Looking directly into the audience.*) Oh! Look! Out there!

Doog: There are at lot of people! Do you think there could possibly be—

Minus: (*Overwhelmed.*) THREE HUNDRED?

All: (*Amazed.*) THREE HUNDRED?

King: (*Coming down C.*) Yes, Doog! There are three hundred! The MAGIC RIDDLE must mean that these three hundred voices can set you free!

(*A sudden blast of thunder and a blinking of lights recalls the fury and apprehension of Master Live and the Witches, as all the characters turn to look back at the turret.*)

Live: (*Directly to audience.*) No! No! Don't set him free! GOOD must stay in my power!

B. & B.: Don't let him go!

Say NO! Say NO! NO . . .

King: (*Addressing the audience, as all on stage turn to look front.*) Apparently we have come to the end of the MAGIC RIDDLE! (*Reading.*) It says: GOOD FROM EVIL . . . which means that Doog from Live WINS VICTORY, when your THREE HUNDRED VOICES SET HIM FREE! (*Right to audience.*) It is up to you to free GOOD (*Pointing to Doog.*) FROM EVIL! (*Points to Live.*)

B. & B.: Don't let him go! Say NO! NO!

King: (*To children in audience.*) It is up to you to say "YES" or "NO!" Now, do you want GOOD (*Points to Doog.*) to go free? (*Waits for answer from children.*)

(*As audience calls out "Yes!", Doog drops to his knee, with arms extended in appreciation. Minus steps slightly behind him as he kneels, and then to his L as he rises.*)

Villagers: (*Rejoicing.*) He's free! Good is free!

Doog: Thank you! Thank you very, very much!

King: The MAGIC RIDDLE is solved! GOOD FROM EVIL HAS WON VICTORY! YOUR THREE HUNDRED VOICES HAVE SET HIM FREE!

(*Turns L to congratulate Doog.*) Doog, you are now free!

(*A weak roll of thunder and dimming of the turret lights calls attention to the Ogre and Witches. As all on stage look toward the turret, the King and Doog move upstage to dais, leaving Minus in LC.*)

Live: I'm getting weak! Help . . . help!

B. & B.: Three hundred children's voices call,
Has been our Evil Power's downfall . . . (*They sink weakly to Ogre's feet.*)

Live: (*Simpering.*) Won't somebody please help a poor old man? (*Light dims low in turret.*)

Minus: (*Shaking her fist at him.*) I'll help you, Live! Your Evil Highness! (*Skips upstage to L of turret and calls to him.*) You have been plus, but I am Minus! (*Runs out R, as lights in turret go out completely.*)

King: Now that GOOD is free in the world, the EVIL power has vanished. (*Referring to the disappearance of the turret-vision.*)

Queen: And we hope GOOD (*Looking at Doog, at her L.*) may remain here with us always!

Princess: Please stay with us, Doog, and be the Court Magician!

Doog: (*Overwhelmed.*) I—I hardly know what to say.

Gweneth: (*Softly, putting her hand in his.*) Then say, "Yes!"

Severe: That's right, Boy, say—

Villagers: Yes! Do stay, Doog! Forever!

Doog: (*Very pleased.*) Yes, I would love to stay and be Court Magician! And in appreciation for your help (*to group.*) and the honor you have given me, (*to Princess.*) I should like to give all of you a little token. (*Crosses quickly to down R, to kneel beside the Black Bag and look into it.*) Why, there's no more Evil magic in here! Only this! (*Lifts up a "magic-box," unlocking and letting down the sides as he talks. He carries it with him to RC, crossing Dame Severe and Gweneth. Severe scoops up Bag to check it, and continues holding it. Gweneth moves to Doog, to help hold the "magic-box."*) But it's empty! Nothing at all! (*Showing it with sides down.*) And I did want to give all of you a gift. (*He hooks up the sides, but again lowers the front to reveal that the box is empty.*) No, nothing at all . . . (*Hooks up front, then, surprised, glances inside once more.*) Say! What's this? (*Pulls out a bright scarf.*) A scarf! And here's another! And another! Enough for all of you! (*Continues to pull out a string of bright scarves, as Princess Pamela comes down to help distribute them, amid laughter and amazement at the continuous string of scarves from the "magic-box."*)

Princess: (*Taking the first, separate scarf over to Ann, then running back to take the end of the scarf-string over R to Dame Severe, who lets string run lightly through her hands, and then across stage L to the villagers, and up to the Queen.*) Here's one for you . . . And you . . . Here . . .

Villagers: Thank you . . . Thank you, Doog . . . And Princess . . .
(A comical and ridiculous little musical theme of a "Baby-cry" introduces the approach of Minus and her charges, R. Doog moves up to R of dais, by King, as Gweneth and Dame Severe, carrying the Bag, move with their part of scarf-string over to upstage LC to join villagers. Princess returns to sit in her throne. All laughingly focus their attention R.)

Minus: *(Springing boldly onstage, and beckoning for the Ogre and Witches to follow her.)* This way, slaves!

(Very meekly, to the accompaniment of a tiny puff of smoke, comes Master Live, flanked closely on each side by the docile Witches on their broom-sticks)

Live: *(Simpering.)* Yes, O Mighty Minus!

Minus: Please, may I push him off the edge of the world?

Doog: *(Down to her L, gently, but firmly.)* No, Minus. We're going to return GOOD for EVIL.

Live: *(Obsequiously.)* Thank you, sir.

Beeka: Don't forget we brought you up!

Bula: With loving kindness filled your cup!

Doog: *(Knowingly.)* Yes . . . I remember.

King: Now that EVIL is in your power, Doog, how do you intend to punish him?

Minus: Please, let me take care of him! I'll just push him off—

Doog: No, Minus, we'll lock EVIL up, forever!

Minus: Then I'll just push Beeka and Bula?

Doog: No, they too will be put behind bars! And you shall be in charge of them!

Minus: *(As the villagers and all express their delight with this news, she proudly snaps them into position, to her L, but in RC.)* Down, Witches! *(They obey, crouching on their brooms.)*

King: Splendid! We'll put them in a cage for everyone to see
 . . . and be reminded of how unpleasant EVIL can be!

Severe: *(Coming down C, to Witches.)* And I shall set them a good example!
(She simpers at them, but as they hiss back, she quickly resumes her position by the villagers and Gweneth.)

Live: *(Crossing up to Minus, leaving Doog far R.)* Will there be any time off for bad behavior?

Bula: *(Over to R side of Master Live, pleadingly to Doog.)*
 We gave you a sporting chance!
 Give us one night in which to dance!

Beeka: *(Joining plea, and moving to L side of Master Live.)*
 To stir the thunder, drive the rain!
 To ride our broom-sticks once again! *(Lovingly strokes her broom.)*

Doog: All right! One night!

King: Of course! There is one night out of each year that you may call your own . . . Halloween!

Villagers: (*Laughing.*) Halloween!

(*A comic music theme of "Halloween" punctuates the laughter, as Minus commands her charges*)

Minus: (*Tapping Master Live on the shoulder, and indicating that he, too, crouch.*) Down, Monster!

Live: (*Obeying, and getting to knees, just behind Witches.*) Yes, ma'am. (*Minus puts her foot up on his back, all facing front, and makes a flourish as though driving a chariot.*)

King: (*Expansively, and coming down stage for finale.*) As the day ends, all is well in the Kingdom!

Queen: (*Holding the Princess's hand, comes down to join King.*) We kept our promise to the Princess!

Princess: (*Standing in line between King and Queen.*) And I got my Court Magician!

Gweneth: (*With Dame Severe to her L, joins line, next to the Queen.*) GOOD was set free!

Minus: EVIL was pushed——er——punished!

King: And we will all——

All: (*The villagers join the line for the finale, smiling at the audience.*)

All . . . live happily ever after!

CURTAIN

(*If an autograph party with the children is planned after the production, as the curtain opens again, the characters walk forward to the forestage, bowing to the children as the curtain closes behind them.*)

King: In honor of the solution of the MAGIC RIDDLE, I should like to invite all of you to join us in the Courtyard. We should like to meet all of you and sign your programs for the MAGIC RIDDLE.

(*To lively musical accompaniment, the cast follows the Royal Family down the aisles and out into the patio for the autograph party with the children.*)

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